ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЙ ГУМАНИТАРНЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ

№ 2 (19), 2008

ФИЛОСОФСКО-КУЛЬТУРОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ЖУРНАЛ

ТОПОС

ФИЛОСОФСКО-КУЛЬТУРОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ **ЖУРНАЛ**

ТОПОС №2 (19), 2008

ISSN 1815-0047

Журнал включен в международную базу данных
The Philosopher's Index

Адрес редколлегии:
topos_2000@mail.ru

Информация о журнале размещена на сайте:
http://topos.ehu.lt

Адрес редакции и издателя:
Европейский гуманитарный университет
Tauro st. 12, LT-01114
Vilnius Lithuania
E-mail: office@ehu.lt

Формат 70x100 $^1/_{16}$. Бумага офсетная. Печать офсетная.
Гарнитура «MyslNarrow».
Усл. печ. л. 15,6. Тираж 300 экз.
Отпечатано: «Petro Ofsetas»
Žalgirio g. 90, LT-09303 Vilnius

CONTENTS

PHILOSOPHY, LIFE AND TRADITION

Knight K. Hannah Arendt's Heideggerian Aristotelianism............. 5
Kačerauskas T. Art of Life and *Vita activa*....................................... 31
Novak P. Two approaches to the Tradition in Hannah Arendt's Works....................................... 42

PLURALITY AND POLITICAL FREEDOM

Besier G. Hannah Arendt and the myth of freedom.................. 48
Klockars K. Plurality as a Value in Arendt's Political Philosophy................................ 62
Degryse A. Hannah Arendt's Conception of Sovereignty.............. 72
Dunn A. Suicide for Political Ends: When killing Oneself becomes a form of Political Action 83

BOUNDARIES OF THE POLITICAL, DEMOCRACY AND TOTALITARIANISM

Kowalska M. Politics, Democracy and the Social Question 88
Fours V. (Re)thinking the «public sphere» with Arendt and Habermas....................................... 94
Kabasakal D. Boundaries of the Political in Hannah Arendt's Thought: Exclusion of the 'Social Question'..............101
Norkus Z. Why Hannah Arendt's Ideas on Totalitarianism are Heterodox? 114
Stoklosa K. Democratizing Poland with Hannah Arendt 137
Vandeputte K. Arendt, Lyotard and the Political Realm..................144

PERSPECTIVES ON THE «HUMAN CONDITION»

Shchyttsova T. Natality and Community: Overcoming Deathcenteredness of the Classical Metaphysical Thinking...155
Honkasalo J. Praxis, logos and theoria – the threefold structure of the human condition.............................169
Moskalewicz M. Melancholy of Progress: the Image of Modernity and the Time-Related Structure of the Mind in Arendt's Late Work 181

PREFACE

The papers included in this issue were initially presented at the international conference "The Legacy of Hannah Arendt in the Early 21st Century" hosted by the Chair of Philosophy at the European Humanities University, Belarus/Lithuania and the Chair of Philosophy at the Vilnius University, May 18–19, 2007 in Vilnius.

The conference was dedicated to the centenary of Hannah Arendt, whose philosophy belongs to the most significant and influential accomplishments in the political thought of the 20th century. Hannah Arendt was indubitably the pioneering thinker and the discerning diagnostician of the epoch; her analysis of the origins of totalitarianism, the emphasis on the constitutive role of the political in human life, the reflections on the human condition in general, – all this retains its actuality for us, as much as we face the new developments in our social world and seek to comprehend their inner uncertainties and threats.

The conference was aimed at, first, exploring the theoretical legacy of Hannah Arendt from diverse analytical and disciplinary angles and, second, discussing the possibilities and forms of its application to the complex and ambiguous realities in the early 21st century.

HANNAH ARENDT'S HEIDEGGERIAN ARISTOTELIANISM

Kelvin Knight*

Abstract

Hannah Arendt is sometimes thought to present a modern Aristotelian politics, and this paper first explores that thought's rationale. The rationale is Heideggerian, in that it follows Heidegger's influential focus upon Aristotle's division of action from both production and theory. Arendt criticizes what she calls "the tradition of political philosophy", which allegedly conceals action beneath theory and ends with Marx's confusion of action with production. This paper also questions the rationale of that critique.

Keywords: Arendt, politics, tradition, philosophy, action, Heidegger, Aristotelianism, labour, work, production, Marx.

1. Arendt's Philosophy

Hannah Arendt has sometimes been portrayed, especially in America, as a brilliantly idiosyncratic thinker. Brilliant she was, but to regard her as idiosyncratic is to decontextualize her from her intellectual sources and to detach her from the history of ideas in which she continually immersed herself. Now that Heidegger's philosophy has been partially dissociated from his flirtation with totalitarian politics, it is a benign commonplace that Arendt felt his influence profoundly. Both she and he were influenced by a German philosophical tradition that owed much to Kant, but which traced its origins all the way back to classical Greece. Clearly, Arendt did not feel directly all of the influences felt by Heidegger. Her early apprehension of Heidegger was not as phenomenologist, formed through engagement with Thomistic Catholicism, with Brentano, and with Husserl. Rather, she first understood him as an existentialist, as grappling with those issues raised by Kierkegaard with which she had already been excited, and, therefore, as comparable to Jaspers, with whom, during their later estrangement, she would compare him unfavourably, in ways warranted less by his philosophy than by his politics. Nonetheless, he influenced the way in which she was to become more than an existentialist. It is from him that she adopted a phenomenological, anti-causal conception of action and, also, an antipathy toward what they both call «the tradition» of Western philosophy. Although Arendt did not take

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her politics from Heidegger, what she writes of politics is influenced by that which she took from his philosophy.

Arendt used to be routinely regarded as an Aristotelian, especially in Germany. For example, Jürgen Habermas said that her «chief philosophical work, *The Human Condition*, serves the systematic renewal of the Aristotelian concept of praxis» or action.[1] More recently, it has been argued that, to the contrary, Arendt, as a Heideggerian, cannot be Aristotelian.[2] And as against that, it has been argued that Heidegger was a singularly authentic interpreter of Aristotle, that Heidegger's philosophy was based in a reworking of Aristotle's[3], and therefore that Arendt's «rehabilitation of 'práxis'» may be understood, without contradiction, as at once Heideggerian and Aristotelian.[4] Of course, whether Arendt should indeed be called «Aristotelian» depends on what is intended by the term, which can have at least three different denotations.

First, what might be called the traditional usage of «Aristotelianism» denotes the assimilation of Aristotle's theoretical and practical philosophies to Christian doctrine. This assimilation was effected, above all, by Thomas Aquinas, whose theological-cum-philosophical project was revived in the late nineteenth-century by Pope Leo XIII and has been sustained by the Roman Catholic church ever since. In the Germanophone world, its revival was assisted, at a distance, by Adolf Trendelenburg and Franz Brentano, and its sustenance, more closely, by Josef Pieper and Robert Spaemann. From this perspective, Aristotelianism «has the character of compromise between "pure reason" and "practical reason"». Theoretical reason «is removed from all contingency» and concerns «the fulfillment of perfect self-sufficiency» and «happiness» within «a totality which is ... more comprehensive than even that of the polis», whereas practical reason «keeps the contingencies of life within boundaries» and «institutionalizes ... means».[5] Although Arendt agrees about the importance of worldly protection against chance, she is most certainly no Aristotelian in this, Thomistic sense.

A second usage of the term «Aristotelianism» refers to the work of Aristotle himself. Such reference inevitably involves interpretation. Here, the young Heidegger's philologically audacious attempt to reveal the meaning of Aristotle's texts from beneath centuries of Latin translation and scholastic appropriation poses a radical alternative to Aristotelianism in the first sense. He argued that Thomistic tradition had concealed Aristotle's central concern with phronesis, and with the praxis that phronesis «serves»; that is, with our very being and acting in the world. This concern he explored in a seminar series directed to Plato's Sophist, in which he used Book Six of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics as the key to reveal the previously hidden meaning of earlier Greek thought. Phronesis he declared to be «conscience set into motion, making an action transparent»[6].

Arendt attended these seminars alongside other nascent intellectuals, including Hans-Georg Gadamer. It was her first experience of Heidegger, and it, like him, caused a great impression on her. It profoundly influenced her Socratic understanding of the life of the mind, and of thinking as the speech «of the soul to itself»[7]. And it profoundly influenced her

understanding of the life of action, as something utterly immediate. For Heidegger, phronesis involves what cannot be forgotten because it concerns one's own being, intending, and acting. As it concerns what is to be done under contingent circumstances, it may be equated with judgement. But it is not to be understood, with Thomistic tradition, as the «prudential» choice of particular means to universal ends. Rather, it is the primal answering of the existential «call» to the vocation of Dasein (and we might therefore interpret the interpreter through a lineage that is Kierkegaardian, Lutheran, and Pauline). Heidegger's interpretive aim in distinguishing phronesis, and praxis, from theoria and techne was to redirect human sensibility back upon its own being, from its traditional gaze at God and its modern, empirical concern with technique, technology, and production.

Thirdly, the term «Aristotelianism» is used – often with the prefix «neo-» – to characterize a post-Heideggerian project of «rehabilitating» a tradition of «practical philosophy»,[8] as distinct from theoretical philosophy. Neo-Aristotelians need not, like Heidegger, spend their time in critical engagement with the history of Western metaphysics, because Heidegger has already done that work for them. Franco Volpi has recently argued that Arendt's argument for «a rehabilitation of 'práxis'» places her within this movement.[9] If so, she might be regarded as one of its leading members, along with such luminaries as Gadamer, Nicholas Lobkowicz, Joachim Ritter, and Wilhelm Hennis (especially given that *The Human Condition* was published in German in 1960, the same year as Gadamer's *Truth and Method*).

Arendt's work shares three characteristics with that of most other members of this post-Heideggerian group. First, it seldom acknowledges Heidegger's inspiration, and this precisely because of these Germans discomforting intellectual proximity to him. Secondly, it is informed by an extensive knowledge of and engagement with what they, like him, call «the tradition», a tradition which they, unlike him, understand to have ended before their own time. Thirdly, her work, and theirs, is concerned with theorizing practice, as distinct from both theoria and poiesis, theory and production.

2. Political Science, and Political Philosophy

Arendt understood herself to have left philosophy when she left Germany, disillusioned. In America, she represented herself as a political scientist. If she is indeed to be regarded as a post-Heideggerian neo-Aristotelian, then she (alongside Hennis) must be regarded as the group's leading political scientist. As such, she may be contrasted with Gadamer, who, in famously excusing Heidegger's errors by referring to «the political incompetence of philosophy», admitted such incompetence himself. Allowing Heidegger the same excuse, Arendt (again like Hennis, later) disclaimed not politics but philosophy.

Arendt made her mark as a political scientist in her account of totalitarianism's origins in European anti-semitism and imperialism, which

informed American political scientists' Cold War juxtaposition of that alien creed to their own pluralism. But, raised on the left, Arendt was never a philosophical McCarthyite, and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* exculpates Europe's philosophical tradition from Karl Popper's characterization of it as the open, pluralistic society's most elemental enemy. For Arendt, totalitarianism is an answer to the question of how to live after the demise of traditional certainties, and an answer anticipated less by Plato or Hegel than by Hobbes.[10]

Upon completing Origins, Arendt returned to consider that which she had left behind. As she said in a letter to Heidegger, a central concern in these years was «representation of the traditional relationship between philosophy and politics, actually the attitude of Plato and Aristotle as the basis of all political theories»[11]. This «representation» is intended as no rehabilitation, for even if what she calls «the tradition of political philosophy» was innocent of causing totalitarianism, it was nonetheless guilty of hiding the reality of politics. It was not a tradition of a specifically practical philosophy but, on the contrary, a tradition of theoretical philosophers' understanding of the alien activity of politics as a mere means to their own end of contemplation, in opposition to which Arendt defines her concerns: plurality rather than identity, freedom, opinion and persuasion rather than causality, truth or logic, and the life of speech and action rather than of silent contemplation. In contrast to philosophy's ideal of solitary, contemplative «man», the reality of politics is the plural and interactive «world» of «men».

Arendt's aim in returning to the «the basis of all political theories» is genealogical and deconstructive. She wants «to discover the real origins of traditional concepts in order to distill from them anew their original spirit» and «underlying phenomenal reality»,[12] and, as she had written when still in Germany, philosophy's claim «to embody truth as such .... can be seriously undermined only by tracing specific philosophies back to their origins in particular situations». Even if, after her disillusionment with Heidegger the man, and after her political awakening, her ambition is no longer to return all the way back beneath tradition to an «ontic», primordial sense of human Being as such[13], her ambition at least remains that of returning to a prephilosophical and authentically political sense of being with others.

And, as Theodore Kisiel says, it is «Arendt's unique development of Heidegger's concept ... of being together with others» that yields «her unique concept of the political».[14]

Arendt's deconstruction of the traditional «relationship between philosophy and politics» starts from Heidegger's «interpretation» of Plato's «parable of the cave».[15] «Our tradition of political thought began when the death of Socrates made Plato despair of polis life»[16] and, «politically, Plato's philosophy shows the rebellion of the philosopher against the polis»,[17] in claiming for philosophers an exclusive knowledge of the true idea of the good. Arendt considers it «decisive that Plato makes the agathon [good] the highest idea – and not the kalon [beautiful, or noble] – for 'political' reasons»[18].

What Arendt regards as Plato's political reason for elaborating his idea of the good is that, whereas the idea of beauty suggests something that is to be passively and silently contemplated, the idea of the good is – in the words of the young Aristotle, quoted by Arendt – «the most exact measure of all things»[19]. As such, the idea of the good is something «to be applied» in an analogous way to that in which technical expertise is applied in craft production. «It is precisely ruling, measuring, subsuming, and regulating that are entirely alien to the experiences» of philosophical wonder and contemplation. However, following his own disillusionment at the death of Socrates – not, as for Arendt, with philosophy, but with politics – Plato modified «the doctrine of ideas so that it would become useful for a [philosophical] theory of politics», which he did by elevating «the idea of the good, since 'good' in the Greek vocabulary always means 'good for' or 'fit'». Therefore, «in the hands of the philosopher, the expert in ideas, [the ideas] can become rules and standards or ... laws». From this, Arendt goes so far as to propose that the idea of «rule ... can be traced to a conflict between philosophy and politics, but not to specifically political experiences»[20]. It is for philosophical reasons that both «Plato and Heidegger, when they entered into human affairs, turned to tyrants and Führers»[21].

3. Premisses for Politics

Arendt's «representation of the traditional relationship between philosophy and politics» was, she told Heidegger, only one of «three ... interconnected» subjects upon which she was working after Totalitarianism. Another was «an analysis of the types of states, with the goal of uncovering where the concept of authority got into the political ('each body politic is composed of those who rule and those who are ruled'), and how the political sphere is constituted differently in different cases»[22]. This included the differentiation of totalitarian from authoritarian states[23] in a way that was, again, to prove congenial to American political scientists during the Cold War.

Aristotle's status as the first political scientist was secured by his typology of poleis, and when Arendt describes as «Aristotelian» her characteristic way of approaching new subjects by drawing distinctions[24] she is more likely thinking of this than of his differentiation of virtues, his specification of natural kinds, or his seminal definition of disciplines. More elemental than his differentiation of kinds of poleis was, though, his differentiation of political community from the economic community of the oikos or household. For Arendt, these are «'two orders of existence'», «to which 'every citizen belongs'»: that of the «household community ... concerned with ... the physical necessities ... involved in maintaining individual life and guaranteeing the survival of the species», and that of the «'bios politikos' [which] Aristotle called the 'good life'» – a «definition» which, unlike «the differentiation itself, conflicted with common Greek opinion»[25]. What Arendt did not say was that Aristotle's definition of political community is teleological, or that, at the outset of the

Politics, he proposes that every kind of community – the oikos, as well as the polis – aims at some kind of good. It is in this proposition that the tradition finds its best justification for claiming that Aristotle's practical philosophy is premissed upon his theoretical philosophy.

Arendt normally ignores this theoretical premiss, but, on occasion, she expressly rejects it. The idea of something «having its end in itself» she judges «paradoxical».[26] For her, and for her pre-philosophical and «pre-polis» Greeks, «no 'end', no ultimate telos» can justify action, and their understanding of action is utterly alien to «the Aristotelian definition of praxis which ... became authoritative throughout the tradition and which stated that "actions do not differ with respect to the beautiful and the non-beautiful in themselves so much as in the end for the sake of which they were undertaken"»[27]. For them, and for her, actions that are justified by their effects are entirely distinct from those that are fully justified by their intrinsic beauty and nobility. The kalon, and not the teleological idea of t'agathon, which «degrades ... everything into a means»,[28] is, it seems, «the highest idea» of action.

Arendt substitutes another – theoretical – premiss. On her interpretation, the Aristotelian and Greek distinction between political and economic communities is premissed on a distinction between freedom and necessity, so that «the freedom of the 'good life' rests on the domination of necessity» through citizens' coercive domination of women and slaves, concerned with satisfying citizens' needs, and also of children, within the household. Viewing his distinction in this light, Arendt argues that Aristotle made «glaringly contradictory statements» in saying, first, «that the polis is based upon the principle of equality and knows no differentiation between rulers and ruled», unlike the oikos, and, then, introducing «a kind of authority into ... the life of the polis» by introducing «into the political realm ... a distinction between rulers and ruled, between those who command and those who obey». In this way, «he superimposes on the actions and life in the polis those standards which ... are valid only for the behavior and life in the household community»[29]. Arendt's objection here is not to «rule» or «domination» as such, but only to its introduction into the political world shared, exclusively, by citizens.

Regarding premisses, there is room to doubt that the radical distinction between freedom and necessity which Arendt imputes to the ancients was really so fundamental for them. Kant was the first philosopher who she read, and one whom she often favours by exempting from "the tradition of political philosophy". Augustine, "the first philosopher of the will",[30] was another early and major influence. Therefore, although her political conception of freedom might well appear to be the outer freedom of citizenship and not the inner freedom of the will, it is conceivable that her attempt at a genealogy of freedom is more influenced by intervening tradition than she allows.

4. Modernity

If this second subject that Arendt was «working on» in the fifties was to prove relatively fruitless, the third was to issue in her finest single work, *The Human Condition*:

> «Perhaps starting with Marx on the one hand and Hobbes on the other, an analysis of the completely disparate activities that, from the perspective of the vita contemplativa, have usually been lumped together in the vita activa: that is, work – production – action, whereby work and action have been understood on the model of production: work became "productive", and action was interpreted in an end-means context. (I would not be able to do this, if indeed I can, without what I learned from you in my youth.)»[31]

From the traditional perspective of the life of contemplation, a simple dichotomy is allegedly drawn between it and the busy, unphilosophical life of action. That Arendt was hardly alone in objecting to this dichotomy we have already seen, and those with whom Volpi associates her in a supposedly shared argument for «a rehabilitation of 'práxis'» might add to what she here told Heidegger that her elemental differentiation of «beautiful» action from productive «work» (even if not from «labour») was first drawn by Aristotle and then passed on through an Aristotelian tradition of specifically practical philosophy. Rightly or wrongly, this is not how Arendt approaches the subject. Instead, she looks to modern thinkers for the origins of a disaggregation of what tradition had allegedly «lumped together».

We might expect Arendt to look to Kant here. It was in the first half of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* that the Judaeo-Christian idea of creation was most incisively humanized, beginning a line of thought that passed through Schiller, Hegel and Feuerbach to Marx. The thought was that humans can, like God, be creators; that we, too, can infuse our products with our own qualities, or genius. Works of such expressive, «free art» are understood as products of individual artists and not of particular classes of artisans, who instead engage in «mercenary art» or «labor» which «attracts us only through its effect (e. g. pay), so that people can be coerced into it».[32] Adapting the traditional idea of perception in light of more recent ideas of sensibility, Kant's idea of «aesthetic» judgement was that such individual works constitute tasteful subjects of polite, civilized communication. Labour is activity performed out of natural necessity, whereas work is freely creative in a way that supplements virtue with virtuosity.

Instead of looking to Kant, Arendt originally looked to Hobbes in attempting her project of conceptual disaggregation. This is, in part, because Hobbes attempted «to get rid of metaphysics for the sake of a philosophy of politics», in which «the task of philosophy» would be «to establish a reasonable teleology of action» in the sense of guiding «purposes and aims».[33] Arendt's use of the term «teleology» here might well be thought surprising. Not only does it conflict with tradition; it also conflicts with Heidegger, for whom telos «does not mean anything like 'purposeful behavior'»[34]. Nonetheless, for Arendt, Hobbes exemplifies «the teleological

political philosophies» of early modernity, when «insistence on absolute novelty and the rejection of the whole tradition became commonplace».[35] Hobbes' philosophy still resembled that of Plato insofar it was based in a conception of the nature of singular «man», but the nature of that singular subject was reconceived. «The old definition of man as an animal rationale acquires a terrible [indeed, mathematical] precision» as that of an animal able to «reckon with consequences», especially the consequences of his own purposive actions, even as the old idea of contemplation is replaced with an idea of scientific work as «producing» the «objects it wishes to observe».[36] The state is itself an artifact, the result of human reckoning and purposiveness. On Arendt's account, this new political philosophy «founders» for the simple reason that there can be no such fit between intentions and consequences in human action. With Hobbes, «reality and human reason have parted company»[37].

Here, again, we may compare Kant, who, in the second half of his third Critique, having discussed the production of beautiful objects which can be understood as ends in themselves, refashioned teleology into the regulative ideal through which we understand the apparent unity and organic purposiveness of natural phenomena, the inner essences of which can never be known. Here the idea of teleology as purposiveness becomes reflective, contemplative and speculative. Understood through this principle, the state becomes an «organization» in which «all work together» and each is «purpose as well as means».[38]

This speculative idea of «the whole that gives meaning to the particulars»[39] is perhaps a surprising one for Arendt to have embraced, given that it renders the position of «the actor ... partial by definition». What Arendt wants to argue, following Kant, is that this idea leads to «the criterion» of judgement as «communicability» among an audience of spectators, and, therefore, that «the standard of deciding ... is common sense».[40] From her existential premiss of one's being with others, this may follow, but «the tradition» – more particularly, the tradition of German idealism – was to make something very different of it. Where she wishes that Kant would have elaborated a «political philosophy», such a philosophy was, actually, elaborated by Hegel. And, where she observes Kant speaking of the history of humanity as a species, Hegel elaborated human history as a whole, and as a «totality».

The culmination of German idealism in Hegel need not be regarded as the end – still less, as Hegel himself would have had it, the dialectical and teleological completion – of this philosophical story. Even if neo-Kantianism can be no more than an epilogue, the rise of existentialism may be regarded as another episode, and, for Arendt, one that follows immediately afterwards.[41] In retrospect, this episode certainly culminates not with Jaspers but with Heidegger himself, and with the postmodernist deconstruction of Arendt's «common sense». Not being together with others within either a purposive totality or an open public space but, on the contrary, being different from others is the postmodern condition, and this is a condition that requires intricate administration and policing of the kind that Arendt consistently calls «rule by nobody»; that is,

rule by precisely the kind of institutional structure that is guided not by any of Montesquieu's «principles of action» but by the conformist and compartmentalized norms of Weber's – and Eichmann's – «bureaucratic rationality».

5. «Practice»

«Practical means moral in Kant», notes Arendt[42], and his *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* is, indeed, an account of specifically moral reasoning. In his terminology, Kant follows Christian Wolff,[43] but not in its usage, because Wolff attempted to elaborate not a metaphysics of morals but a «general practical philosophy» concerned with all actions and «determinations of the will» (individual, political, and economic), irrespective of whether grounded in inclination or reason.[44] And moral means rational in Kant.

«Morality» is usually presented by Arendt in the existentialist and Kantian terms of individual responsibility. Her politicization of «evil» apart, Arendt's discussion of morality is confined to a couple important but isolated essays. Insofar as The Life of the Mind may be understood as attempting to integrate the insights of those essays with the rest of her philosophy, it is an attempt that was, unfortunately, abortive. What can be said with certainty is that her regard for Kant's moral philosophy and for his usage of praktisch and Praxis (which, to a considerable extent, was shared by Heidegger, who dedicated his Sophist lectures to the neo-Kantian Paul Natorp), and not just Heidegger's use of words with indigenous German roots, influenced her own avoidance of the terms. If she differs from Gadamer and his compatriots in not calling herself a «practical philosopher», it is as much because of the Kantian connotation of «practical» as the Platonic denotation of «philosopher».

Arendt exaggerates in asserting that, whereas for Kant «practical ... concerns the individual qua individual», he «could conceive of action only as ... governmental acts».[45] As against this, Kant consistently spoke of «action» (Handlung) that was either moral and prudential, or skilful[46], even if he still followed Wolff in consigning specifically «political» acts to the state. The semantic distinction between moral «practice» and political «action» that she attributes to Kant is, in fact, hers. Even if she never says that action is motivated by inclinations rather than reasons, and even if she occasionally says that morality «is» «customary rules»[47], she resists taking the typical «neo-Aristotelian» path behind Kant and back through Wolff all the way to a Greek idea of ethos, in which the distinction between individual reason and individual inclination is overcome by an idea of individuals as accustomed, enculturated and socialized into norms.

Instead of taking this path to a primordial ethics, Arendt traces «action» to prephilosophical Greek through Latin. She refers not to actio (still less to actus, with its traditional, teleological implication of actualization, completion or perfection) but to the infinitive, agere, which she associates with the Greek archein.[48] As she notes in *The Human Condition*, archein can mean either «to begin» or «to rule», and here she accords with Ar-

istotle's famous definition in *Metaphysics Delta*. Where she goes beyond Aristotle (and beyond Liddell and Scott), in the speculatively philological manner of Heidegger, is in proposing that the term can also mean «to lead», and that this pre-traditional meaning explains both of the others.[49] Even if opposed to a division between ruler and subjects, she seems not to object to that between leader and followers, but, of course, when she speaks of action, she (as with the meaning she attributes to Kant's «practice») intends to exclude governmental rule. Therefore, even in relation to the term archein, she says that «to act ... means to take an initiative, to begin ... or to set something into motion»[50]. The term praxis, and its familiar contrast with poiesis, enters Arendt's genealogy of «action» when she blames Plato's Statesman for the loss of the original sense of archein, which is there «replaced by a relationship that is characteristic of the supervisory function of a master telling his servants how to accomplish and execute a given task»[51]. This «transformation of action into the execution of orders» is what led to the equation of praxis with poiesis,[52] and to what Arendt alleges to have been Aristotle's own «flagrant contradiction» of what he said of political equality and freedom[53].

6. Performance and Measurement

We began this essay by saying that Arendt adopted a phenomenological view of action from Heidegger, and we have noted her epistolary acknowledgement of this to him. Nonetheless, there remains some room to agree with the claim that this very acknowledgement «suggests ... a point-by-point rebuttal»[54]. She made the acknowledgement immediately after referring to his famous *Letter on Humanism*, and, in rebutting any understanding of «action ... on the model of production ... in an end-means context», she at least half disagrees with what he said in beginning that text:

> «We are still far from pondering the essence of action decisively enough. We view action only as causing an effect. The actuality of the effect is valued according to its utility. But the essence of action is accomplishment. To accomplish means ... producere».[55]

For Arendt, the essence of action is not, as it is for Hobbes, «causing an effect», but nor is it, as it is for Heidegger, «accomplishment», even when what is meant by this is «to unfold something into the fullness of its essence», and even when what is meant by a being's «essence» has nothing to do with any universalist abstraction of a human nature.[56] Rather, for Arendt, developing the idea of being together with others, the essence of action is its very performance before others. It is to others that the self is revealed. On her account, action is always accompanied by speech, logos, and this for the Heideggerian reason that it involves the actor's «disclosing» and «revealing» of himself to others.

The idea that the essence of action is performance, undertaken for its own sake, as actualization, distinct from production, is one that neo-Aristotelian practical philosophers would claim for Aristotle and their tra-

dition. Arendt disagreed when, early, she wrote that Aristotle understood «praxis in the light of poiesis, his own assertions to the contrary notwithstanding», and that he «introduced in a systematic way the category of means and ends into the sphere of action».[57] In The Human Condition she concedes that his concept of actuality theorized the characteristically Greek idea that «greatness ... lie[s] only in the performance itself and neither in its motivation nor its achievement», adding, once again, how «paradoxical» is the idea of an «end in itself» but allowing that, on Aristotle's own account, the «specifically human achievement lies altogether outside the category of means and ends».[58] In her last work she gave his theoretical philosophy its full, teleological due, acknowledging that, on his account, «ends are inherent in human nature»[59]. This, she thinks, separates him decisively from her morality of individual responsibility, as (unlike those who «reckon with consequences») he «never even» mentions «the specifically moral problem of the means-end relationship»,[60] but then morality is something that she kept separate from politics.

We can therefore say of Arendt that she moved progressively toward the position of neo-Aristotelian practical philosophy. (Certainly she moved a long way from the time when she could say that Aristotle, and the metaphysical tradition he initiated, held «that the inquiry into the first causes of everything ... comprises the chief task of philosophy», and that it was against this tradition that Hobbes contended «that, on the contrary, the task of philosophy was ... to establish a reasonable teleology of action».[61]) But in moving toward a metaphysically teleological Aristotle, she still kept herself entirely separate from Thomistic tradition, insisting that it «never» occurs to Aquinas «that there could be an activity that has its end in itself and therefore can be understood outside the means-end category», whereas Aristotle differentiated «the productive arts ... from the performing arts».[62] It is therefore hardly surprising that even a friendly suggestion that her way of drawing distinctions represented «a medieval habit of thought» elicited the response that it «comes right out of Aristotle. And for you, it comes out of Aquinas».[63] But then what she says of Aquinas she implies even of Heidegger: that it is «striking» how he, «who depended so heavily on the Philosopher's teachings and especially on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, should have neglected the distinction between poiesis and praxis», which is «crucial for any theory of action».[64] For her, still more clearly than for Heidegger, if action has any «essence», it consists only in performance.

What Arendt called Hobbes' «reasoned teleology of action» reduced the good, the goal of action, to what the tradition called «external goods», as distinct from the internal good of actualizing human potentiality. In modernity, authority disappeared along with belief in any such measure of the goodness of individuals' inclinations, reasons, and actions.

Arendt is as opposed as was Heidegger to any Platonic idea of the good, as a standard. Where she broke from Heidegger politically was in opposing, still more, the replacement of such traditional authoritarianism with any new totalitarianism. What she instead wished to replace it with was a plural world of existential viewpoints. But it does not follow that

this world is to lack any standards. We have heard her quote the young, Platonic Aristotle that the idea of the good is «the most exact measure of all things», but she also quotes the older Aristotle that «the measure for everybody is virtue and the good man». To this, she adds that such a «standard is what men are themselves when they act»[65]. It is a standard set in public remembrance and in histories of heroic acts and exemplary lives; «courage is like Achilles etc.»[66]. This is the kind of history written by the Greeks, the Romans, and the Florentines, a kind of history that has more in common with poetry than philosophy, written by those who believe in fortuna and perhaps in recurrence, but not in progress.

That Kant believed in the historical progress of humanity as a species, Arendt well knew, but here she accused him of a contradiction just as radical as that of which she accused Aristotle. «The very idea of progress ... contradicts Kant's notion of man's dignity»,[67] and it is the idea of «man's dignity» that she wished to retain. This she understood to be expressed not only in his «practical», moral philosophy but also in what she identified as his belief in «exemplary validity»[68], and she combined the two in the proposition «that, confronted with the example of virtue, human reason knows what is right and that its opposite is wrong»[69]. This conception of regulative validity is, she further proposes, «far more valuable» than his reconceptualization of teleology as a regulative ideal.[70] This is a view of Kant that Arendt shares with Gadamer, and that draws Kant close to what neo-Aristotelians call practical philosophy, even if she, unlike Gadamer, and unlike John McDowell, does not attempt to elaborate it into a rehabilitated ethic of the kalon, the noble, as opposed to the good.

7. Arendt's Politics

Although she never understood herself as attempting to rehabilitate a tradition of political philosophy, she did, briefly, invoke a «tradition» of political, exemplary and «revolutionary» action. Whereas members of the post-Heideggerian group back in Germany were conservative, she established a very different reputation for herself in On Revolution.

In part, this was due to her changed, American context. She had no interest in that context philosophically, and she evidently never felt any imperative to engage with American pragmatism or with the analytic philosophy of mind and action,[71] but she was more favourably impressed by American politics. Whereas the focus of her old compatriots (even Lobkowicz, who for years taught in the States but did not, like her, make it a new home) remained upon the heritage of what she calls «Europe's cultural grandeur», she became interested in «the New World's political development».[72] Away from European metaphysics, she thought (unlike Ritter or the early Hennis) that action springs not from any final, teleological ends but from ever new beginnings. America's revolution was successful because it occurred in a veritably new – and tradition-free – world, and American politics posed no danger of totalitarianism because they occurred in a public sphere that lacked mass parties and a massive, bureaucratic state.

Arendt started «with Montesquieu [her] analysis of the types of states»[73] because he «was the first to discover» that governmental or state «structure taken in itself would be altogether incapable of action or movement». Political power is, instead, «generated by men acting together». Whereas for Plato «the best form of government would also be the most unchangeable and unmovable», Montesquieu «introduced three principles of action», including the principle of virtue, the «love of equality in sharing power», which «inspires the actions in a republic».[74] However, as Arendt was much less interested in constructing a typology of states than in conceptualizing free and public action, her attention soon switched from Montesquieu to Machiavelli. Whereas Heidegger simply said that translation of Plato's Politeia «into German as 'Der Staat'» demonstrated modern incomprehension,[75] Arendt acknowledges the importance of Machiavelli's use of «the hitherto unknown term lo stato» «for a new body politic» that banished the idea «of the good» from «the public» to «the private sphere of human life».[76] The principle of republican virtue was conceptualized by Machiavelli as «the excellence with which man answers the opportunities the world opens up before him in the guise of fortuna .... where the accomplishment lies in the performance itself and not in an end product which outlasts the activity that brought it into existence and becomes independent of it».[77] Here Anglophone scholars have «borrowed from» her, rehabilitating «the vita active» by tracing a specifically «Atlantic republican tradition» that took its theory from Aristotle, its precedents from Rome, and stretched from Machiavelli through Harrington to the revolutionary founding of the USA.[78]

Having traced this «revolutionary tradition», Arendt was unprepared for the student revolt that exploded in 1968. Even if she had not committed anything like the errors she forgave in Heidegger, she now, and not for first time, experienced the unintended consequences of her own literary interventions into human affairs.

On Violence was written as a corrective. For example, having previously spoken of Marx's «glorification of violence»[79], Arendt soon revised her judgement when confronted with the real «glorification of violence» in the student movement and in Sartre's supposedly Marxist existentialism.[80] Having issued this corrective, she turned increasingly from praising the life of action to reflecting on the life of the mind.

One view that she did not revise is her own glorification of spontaneous, popular councils. Revolutions' real political spring in the desire for freedom has too often been misrepresented and repressed, as happened in 1789 and in those subsequent European revolutions which began with the spontaneous creation of local councils, or soviets, but were misled by those wearing philosophical blinkers[81] or were simply crushed, as happened to the Paris Commune in 1871 and in Hungary in 1956.[82] That the revolutionary council is now the «appropriate institution» to replace the «the polis, the space of men's free deeds and living words» she declared before 1968,[83] and, even in its aftermath, she made amply clear that a federation of councils remained her political ideal.[84] But, given her premisses,

political ideals can have little more than moral ideals to do with the life of action.

8. Actions and Consequences

As she told Heidegger, Arendt intended to begin her conceptual distinction between «activities that, from the perspective of the vita contemplativa, have usually been lumped together in the vita active» «with Marx on the one hand and Hobbes on the other». The reason for which she proposed to take Hobbes – who clearly «interpreted [action] in an end-means context» – as a starting point was itself largely Marxist. She has already told us that Hobbes attempted «to get rid of metaphysics for the sake of a [teleological] philosophy of politics», but this attempt was itself a means to the end of legitimating not only the state but, beyond that, capital accumulation, which «the tradition» had condemned as the vice of pleonexia, greed. Hobbes she understood as a possessive individualist, and «the only great philosopher to whom the bourgeoisie can rightly and exclusively lay claim», who, in perceiving that «the limitless process of capital accumulation needs» a sovereign state, had «an unmatched insight into the political needs of the ... rising bourgeoisie», and who legitimated that state «for the benefit of the new bourgeois society».[85] What is most fundamentally new about this society for Arendt is its focus upon the processes of labour and consumption. Hobbes Arendt regards as commercial society's first and greatest philosophical champion, Marx as its greatest critic.

When Arendt observes that with Hobbes «reality and human reason have parted company», she adds that this observation was an «insight» of «Hegel's gigantic enterprise to reconcile spirit with reality».[86] What she never adequately explores is how the German idealist tradition inspired by Kant culminates in this «enterprise», or, more particularly, how Hegel's reconciliation of «spirit with reality», of rationality with actuality, was itself directly inspired by the second half of Kant's third Critique, the *Critique of Teleological Judgement*. What Kant regards as a regulative principle of reflective judgement, through which we make sense of individual beings and, even, of nature as a whole, Hegel imputes also to natural and social actuality. It is by thoroughly reworking in terms of the dimension of time what Kant says of our reflective understanding of purposive and organized being that Hegel is able to elaborate his great philosophy of history. Being is replaced by becoming. As Arendt remarks, for Hegel we find meaning in history by understanding our present as a particular moment between past and future. Whereas she sees in history at most only contingent «trends», Hegel rationalizes it as a whole admitting of actual progress and of increasing self-consciousness through our progressive understanding of ourselves in relation to other beings and to the totality of beings, an increasing self-consciousness that Hegel calls the actualization of reason. Our rationality is reconciled to natural and institutional actuality through progressive understanding of our participation, as individuals, in the universality of nature, of society, and of our society's

history. As we have heard Arendt say of Kant, it is «the whole that gives meaning to the particulars».

What Arendt objects to in Hegel's history is what she perceives as its subordination of humans to a naturalistic necessity. Individual and fully rational purposivessness is subordinated to a superhuman purposiveness, reducing individual activity to the status of participation in a universal process, so that the full self-consciousness of one's temporal relations to others that Hegel regards as modern freedom is tantamount to the denial of what freedom is regarded as by Arendt, which is, if not Kantian autonomy, then at least Kantian spontaneity. She refers to Hegel's historical teleology only as a «dialectic», which perhaps implies a consistent Kantian scepticism about Hegel's false claims for reason. What is here curious is that she continually equates what Hegel says of the «cunning of reason» with what she attributes to Kant as the statement of a «ruse of nature»,[87] perceptible to observers of history but not to its actors. What is at issue here is how best to understand the ramifications of the unintended consequences of action.

Arendt's epistemological objection to Hobbes is that actors can never know beforehand what will be the effects of their actions, so that politics cannot be simply explained in terms of rationality and intentionality. This epistemological objection may be attributed to her appreciation of Kant's antinomy of free will and causality, and that the consequences of an action motivated by a good will can be disastrous.[88] She argues that this «perplexity of human action», which «has been the one great topic of tragedy since Greek antiquity», can only be adequately addressed by acts of forgiveness, which guarantee «the continuity of the capacity for action, for beginning anew».[89] More specifically, she often admitted that it was the tragedy of Greek politics that competition between individuals, each of whom regarded action to have no further justification than its intrinsic «beauty», was tempered by no principle of forgiveness when individual acts had tragic consequences, and that this caused the disintegration of political communities which could, she implies, have been saved by acceptance of such a principle. This admission does not prevent her from blaming later tradition for the continued exclusion of the principle from politics. That the Christian principle of forgiveness remained of purely spiritual significance she blames on Augustine's becoming «a neo-Platonist and Thomas Aquinas a neo-Aristotelian», so that both supposedly isolated forgiveness from the realm of politics in a separate realm of the spirit.[90] It might, therefore, appear surprising that Arendt continually refers so dismissively to what she often calls Hegel's attempt to reconcile «Spirit» with reality, but this is less surprising when we note her argument elsewhere for some such separation. For example, in contrast to her argument for the political desirability of forgiveness of those who can know not of the consequences of what they do, she argues that «the actual antipolitical thrust of the Christian message .... that all human affairs should be managed according to goodness» (not Greek beauty, or republican glory) and that evil should be repaid «with good», requires its adherents «to retreat from the public arena».[91]

Where Arendt sees fortuna and uncertainty in the separation of free will from causality, Hegel perceives systemic purposiveness and a progress that is at once actual and rational. Where she infers from the unintended consequences of action only confirmation of Kant's categorial limits to human reason, Hegel infers the superior understanding and rationality of the reflective observer who, as Arendt puts it, casts a backward eye over history. As she often indicates, the contrary view of Hegel was less confirmed than inspired by the French Revolution, which seemed to actualize philosophical rationality politically. What she does not appreciate is the way in which Hegel found confirmation of the rationality of actuality in the kind of «speculative history» that had been written by Scots and translated into German. She did often refer to Smith, whose «invisible hand» she equated with Hegel's «cunning of reason» and, less often, Kant's «ruse of nature». Although she occasionally related what Smith said of commerce to what Locke said of labour, she (unlike Kant) did not relate this to wider ideas of communication or order in ways vindicated philosophically by the way in which Hume (who Arendt considered uninteresting[92]) advanced beyond Locke. The likes of Hume and Smith identified beneficial consequences of individual action when actors are constrained by rules, and argued that the appearance and persistence of those rules may be explained by those very benefits. As Smith demonstrated, «wealth» and «society» result when commerce is not guided by the visible hand of the state but freely conducted by self-interested individuals acting in accordance with impersonal rules. Although this ordered and civil society is the consequence of human action but, unlike the social contract theorized by Hobbes and Locke, not the result of human design, Hegel took its rationally systematizable satisfaction of material needs to forcefully confirm the progressive rationality of the life of society, in which the lives of individual minds participate. Rejecting this social dialectic, Arendt rearticulates Heidegger's phronetic «conscience» (but never Smith's «impartial spectator») to describe the life of the mind as that of an interior dialectic of «two-in-one».[93]

9. Marx and the Tradition

For Arendt, if Plato stood at the beginning of the tradition, then Marx stood at its end. And if Plato hid action behind the idea of the good then Marx hid it behind the idea of labour. This idea of labour still belonged to philosophical tradition insofar as it was the idea of a value, but Marxism broke with tradition in challenging «the intellectual sphere's claim to absolute validity» and in «unmasking ontology as ideology».[94] Adapting Marx's concept of labour as «man's metabolism with nature», Arendt accused him of confusing it with «work» and, still more seriously, of confusing necessity with freedom.

Arendt often refers to the claim that, following Feuerbach, Marx and Engels corrected Hegel's «inversion» of «man», as subject, and consciousness or idea, as predicate, or that they put Hegel's dialectic back «on its feet».[95] The usual point of her reference is that Marx, in using the same

concepts, nonetheless stays within a Hegelian scheme. And, before The Life of the Mind, she consistently maintained that Hegel remained within the tradition. Therefore, her usual location of Marx was still within the tradition, even though marking its termination.

Where, for Arendt, both Hegel and Marx tested the boundaries of philosophical tradition was in identifying truth with history (always referring, genealogically and deconstructively, to the Roman origins of «tradition», she does not say that to speak of tradition is already to imply an idea of truth as historical, whether affirmatively or deconstructively). That the truth with which they were concerned was anthropocentric, and in this differed from what Plato, Aristotle and their successors regarded as the highest subjects of truth, did not concern Arendt. What did concern her was that «man» was not understood as an unchanging form by Hegel and Marx but as a «species-being» of which progress can be predicated as a «project».[96] Here, it seems, an idea of the progress of knowledge intruded into philosophical tradition from modern science, encouraging Hegel to impute necessity to historical development and Marx to explain that development in terms of economic laws. Against them, and against Plato and Aristotle, Arendt objected that «man» is not a subject at all, and that there is instead an existential plurality of «men». She does not consider it to be a problem that this precludes issuing truths about humankind as such.

Historicism apart, Arendt proposes that Marx's position resembles «the inherent materialism of [Aristotle's] political philosophy»[97], that Marx, «unlike his predecessors in the modern age but very much like his teachers in antiquity, equated necessity with the compelling urges of the life process», and this transhistorical agreement not by mere coincidence but because Marx's «general and often inexplicit outlook was still firmly rooted in the institutions and theories of the ancients»[98]. With Aristotle and Plato, materialism and idealism were combined, in that the ideal subject of their theoretical philosophy was entirely self-sufficient in a way that could be imitated by those human beings who subordinated others to their rule within the household. The domestically ruled provide the necessities of life so that their rulers are freed from such necessity. On this view, the institution of the polis was the community of «the ruling class» and its «ultimate goal ... [the] management of material conditions», of «what is useful for the good life of the ruling class», and man «becomes political by nature» because of this necessary «interest» in ruling others if he is to be free. What Marx therefore did when he asserted that man was the subject of whom ideals might merely be predicated was «fully assert» «the materialism inherent in our tradition from its very beginning».[99] For Marx, as for the Greeks, material necessity had to be mastered before freedom could be enjoyed.

What Aristotle celebrated as the freedom of the few, Marx condemned as the oppression and exploitation of the many. Whereas Aristotle took it to be natural that slaves and women need to be ruled, and argued that those who are necessarily engaged in productive work are not free to engage in politics, Marx looked forward to their liberation. Here, Arendt

agrees with Aristotle. What she adds is that there is a radical difference between the «labour» of women and slaves, endlessly engaged in the natural life cycle, reproducing life and what has to be consumed in order to sustain life, and, conversely, the kind of «work» which, in its concern for ends as well as means, creates both durable products and the artificial «world» that protects us from fortuna. For evidence to support this distinction, she looks not to Aristotle, or to Kant, but to «every European language»[100]. This distinction between labour and work is one that has allegedly been hidden by the tradition, from Plato, who consigned both to the cave, along with «action», to Marx, who understood both in terms of production, and, still with Arendt's «tradition of political philosophy», understood action (as she said to Heidegger) «on the model of production».

What Arendt calls Marx's rebellion against philosophy comprised his Feuerbachian inversion of Hegel, his assertion of mankind's subjectivity as «species-being». Against this, Arendt asserts the anti-essentialist claims of Dasein, the diverse claims of «men» rather than «man», which she thinks can only be advanced once one has domestically mastered the realm of natural necessity and escaped into the political realm of freedom, as expressed in action. Setting aside traditional claims that the life of the mind is «the good life», for the sake of which humans produce and act, she proposes that the life of action is the true kingdom of ends, for the sake of which humans labour and work and in which they are free from those needs that bind us all down, together and uniformly. *The vita activa* is our escape from our common, human condition of biological (or, to be truer to the Greek, zoological) need.

10. Production and Freedom

Arendt understands Marx as sharing her elemental opposition of freedom to necessity. As she notes, he identifies action with «labour» because it is labour that enables us – not individually and existentially but as a species and historically – to escape our animal condition, by producing a «surplus», over and above what is necessary to merely sustain life, and thereby changing the material conditions of our consciousness in creating what she calls a «world». She accuses him of thereby confusing labour with work, taking as emblematic of this confusion his proposition that Milton wrote «Paradise Lost for the same reasons and out of similar urges that compel the silkworm to produce silk».[101] Her claim is that «Marx's whole theory hinges on the early insight that the laborer first of all reproduces his own life by producing his means of subsistence», and she therefore presents Marx as proposing that Milton was merely «producing his means of subsistence» out of the same natural necessity, and with the same exclusion «of 'imagination'», as a silkworm produces silk.[102]

What Marx wrote in the passage to which Arendt refers is that «Milton produced Paradise Lost as a silkworm produces silk, as the activation [Betätigung] of his own nature»[103]. The «urges» to which Arendt refers are indeed «similar» in the two cases, insofar as they are both natural;

the «reasons» can only be the same if they are of the kind that may be imputed to activity by an observer, as a silkworm does not act from reasons. Arendt's accusation against Marx's concept of human subjectivity, or what she calls animal laborans, is that it excludes imagination and reason, but motivating this accusation is her objection to any conception whatsoever of a human nature as setting limits to our spontaneity and freedom of action.

Arendt misrepresents Marx's account of Milton and of human nature, and this for the same reason that she misrepresents the Aristotelian idea of teleology. To say that, in writing imaginative poetry, Milton was activating his own nature is to imply that human nature consists in potentialities to be actualized and fulfilled; so long, that is, as one is not prevented from acting freely and naturally. For Marx, Milton was freely actualizing his natural urge to create, to produce, or, in Arendt's terms, to «work».

What Marx suggests in referring to Milton's poetry goes well beyond the Aristotelian idea of poiesis that informs Arendt's «model of production». She refers warmly to the famous passage in which Marx, speaking of labour as specifically human actualization, identifies «what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees» as the architect's conception of the building as a purposive ideal to be actualized, prior to his own activity of building.[104] Both Arendt and Marx differ from Aristotle's model of production in understanding it more as a human activity than a process that occurs in the product, and Arendt even follows Marx in relating activity to process as the objectification of labour.[105] The point Marx makes with reference to Milton is that actualization of the human capacity for creativity need not be limited to labour's objectification in its product. Paradise Lost was not a form that «already existed ideally»[106] in Milton's mind before he commenced writing it. It was, to the contrary, formed on the parchment at the same time as it was formed in his mind. It was a product not just of his will, practical reason, and physical effort, but also of the spontaneity of his imagination. It was, in other words, an expression of a freedom that separates human beings still more from the nature of silkworms and bees.

It is this freedom that Marx understood to be opposed to capitalism. What, following Smith, he called «productive labour» is labour that produces financial wealth, or «capital». What, adapting Feuerbach, he regarded as wrong with capitalism is that it subordinates human activity to the accumulation of inhuman capital, or of reified «exchange value». He referred to Milton as an exemplar of human freedom. But Milton was also subject to the material imperatives of the socially systemic process of capital accumulation. Marx therefore immediately followed Arendt's quoted passage by recording of Milton: «He later sold his product for £5 and thus became a merchant»[107].

Under capitalism, «activities which formerly ... passed as ends in themselves ... become directly converted into wage-labour».[108] Most labour is immediately alienated from the worker as a commodity, an exchange value. Paradise Lost was not produced out of alienation, even though it was later commodified. In selling it, Milton became a «merchant», a

participant in capitalism, but in working on it, in first producing it for something other then its exchange value, Milton acted as a fully human being. In actualizing his poem, Milton also actualized himself.

As Marx says elsewhere, «if the silkworm were to spin in order to continue its existence as a caterpillar, it would be a complete wage-worker»[109]. But, unlike one of Engels' Mancunian weavers, it does not spin merely in order to sustain its present mode of existence. Rather, it spins its cocoon in order to actualize itself, to become a moth. This Arendt misses, in her simple dichotomy of freedom and necessity. Following Heidegger's conceptualization of power, dynamis, as possibility rather than specific potentiality, she lacked any idea of the activation or actualization of one's nature, and therefore Marx was much more profoundly opposed than was she to what she deplored in labour: the fact that the worker's «life-activity is for him only a means to enable him to exist»[110].

A second way in which Marx goes well beyond the Aristotelian idea of poiesis is in analyzing the way in which labour and production – but not, of course, capital – are fully «socialized» under capitalism. Arendt conceived of labour as solitary, asocial, and private. Even «work», although it helps create the public world, is distinguished from action in that it does not participate in that world. In contrast, Marx, following Hegel, but here far more importantly following also Smith, recognizes the importance of labour not just as a «factor» or «force» of production but in the fully «social relations of production», of distribution, and of exchange. Milton's life as a poet may have been solitary, but as a «merchant» he entered into the social relations of the production and accumulation of capital.

11. Labour and Society

Arendt may have recognized Marx as the greatest critic of commercial society, but she also regarded him as the greatest prophet of its successor: not socialism or communism, but what she called a «labouring» and «consuming» society. This is the technological and utilitarian «mass society». As a society that is more inclusive and «comprehensive than even ... the polis», that «keeps the contingencies of life within boundaries» by providing welfare, and that pursues temporal «happiness» by institutionalizing «means», it is a society as beloved by Thomist Christian Democrats as post-Marxist Social Democrats, and a society at least tolerated by American Democrats and Republicans. But it is a society loathed by Heidegger and by Heideggerian neo-Aristotelians, including Arendt.

Arendt's conception of capitalist history and economy is Marxist, but minus what she calls Marx's dialectical «philosophy». Marx's conception of a future communism she always regarded as a philosophical fantasy, the actualization of philosophy's Platonic ideals by rationally «making history» in a way guaranteed success by Hegel's postulation of freedom as the goal of historical necessity. The idea that history can be intentionally made she regarded as epistemologically erroneous in the same way as is Hobbes' idea of the state as an artifact, and similarly dangerous. That freedom might emerge out of necessity she regarded as a conceptual

«confusion», and confusion compounded by Marx's description of the communist realm of freedom in terms of humankind's emancipation from our most essential activity: labour.

The labour theory of value, as it developed from Locke through Smith and Ricardo to Marx, was the target of especial criticism. Arendt held no brief for neoclassical economics, and (like Aristotle) had no problem with distinguishing between commodities as objects of use and of exchange. Her issue was with the concept of value. As she well knew, in his interpretation of the cave parable, Heidegger had said that Plato offered «the occasion for thinking of 'the good' 'morally' and ultimately reckoning it to be a 'value'»[111], and in the *Letter on Humanism* he had protested that «thinking in values is the greatest blasphemy imaginable against being», and «that precisely through the characterization of something as 'a value' what is so valued is robbed of its worth»[112]. Arendt followed Heidegger in protesting that «universal relativity ... and loss of intrinsic worth ... are inherent in the very concept of value itself»[113] and, as we have seen, that Plato adapted his idea of the good to make of it a measure of human affairs. Marx, in his rebellious attempt to «abolish philosophy» by «realizing it», proposed that the objectification of man's most essential activity is the measure of all things, thereby bringing us «to the threshold of a radical nihilism».[114] Here, too, she followed Heidegger. He complimented Hegel and Marx's recognition of «the homelessness of modern human beings», attributing this to «the modern metaphysical essence of labor ... the objectification of the actual through the human being» and its concealment «in the essence of technology», which might point to «communism» but certainly not to emancipation.[115] For Arendt, too, the modern human condition is one of «alienation» from the «world».

Arendt, then, shares much with Marx; with his critique of modernity, his classical ideals, and even his revolutionary hopes. He, too, eulogized the Paris Commune, in which «public functions» were performed as «real workmen's functions», «as Milton did his Paradise Lost, for a few pounds», but, unlike Arendt, saw «the emancipation of labour [as] its great goal».[116]

In insisting on the separation of a realm of action from that of production and procreation, Arendt indeed evokes something of the ancient ethos of politics. The question that must be asked is whether that political realm has any greater rationale than the domination by its members of those engaged in production and procreation. Arendt might ridicule the idea of an «end in itself», but we might ask whether action undertaken for its own sake has any greater justification. She might abhor the idea of the good as a measure by which to judge action, but we might reasonably suspect that we would be beyond nihilism's threshold without some such standard. She might wish to separate politics from philosophy, and we might acknowledge that philosophy has not always cared enough for our world, but we might well nonetheless fear the destination of a politics freed from principled scrutiny. Most of all, we should fear the destination of a capitalism freed from politics.

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1 Habermas, 1983: 174.
2 Villa, 1996.
3 Kisiel, 1993; Brogan 2005, and, most relevantly, Taminiaux, 1997, which argues that Arendt uses Heidegger's concepts against Heidegger and, therefore, is not Heideggerian; from what Arendt says of Marx inverting Hegel's concepts (see below) and, therefore, remaining Hegelian, she would disagree.
4 Volpi, 2007: 45; Volpi's emphasis.
5 Spaemann, 2000: 60.
6 Heidegger, 1997: 39. The notes of Arendt's own, 1962 course on the *Ethics* can be consulted on the website of the Library of Congress.
7 Heidegger, 1997: 420.
8 Riedel, 1972; 1974. See Knight, 2007: 91–101.
9 Volpi, 2007: 45; Volpi's emphasis.
10 Arendt, 1968g: 156–157; and this notwithstanding Hobbes' concern with private interests, ibid.: 139.
11 Arendt, in Arendt, Heidegger, 2004: 120–121.
12 Arendt, 1968e: 15.
13 Arendt, 1994a: 29–30.
14 Kisiel, 2005: 154.
15 Arendt, in Arendt, Heidegger, 2004: 120; for Heidegger's interpretation, see Heidegger 2002a: 17–106, and, in the later form cited (in the original) by Arendt, Heidegger, 1998b.
16 Arendt, 2005: 6.
17 Arendt, 1968a: 107.
18 Arendt, in Arendt, Heidegger, 2004: 120–121; Greek transliterated. On the good as «the 'highest idea'», see Heidegger, 1998b: 175.
19 Arendt, 1968a: 291.
20 Arendt, 1968a: 112–113.
21 Arendt, 1971: 54.
22 Arendt, in Arendt, Heidegger, 2004: 120.
23 Arendt, 1968a: 96–104.
24 Arendt, 1979: 337.
25 Arendt, 1968a: 117.
26 Arendt, 1953a: 7; Arendt, 1958a: 154–156.
27 Arendt, 1953b: 4; quoting Aristotle's *Politics* 1333a9–10. Inexplicably, Arendt's editor has substituted his own, misleading phraseology for Arendt's accurate translation at 2005: 46.
28 Arendt, 1953a: 6.
29 Arendt, 1968a: 117–118. For a comparison Aristotle's premiss of being and Kant's premiss of freedom, see Heidegger, 2002b.
30 Arendt, 1978a: 84.

31 Arendt, in Arendt, Heidegger, 2004: 120.
32 Kant 1987: 171; Kant's emphasis.
33 Arendt, 1968c: 76.
34 Heidegger, 1995: 85.
35 Arendt, 1968c: 77; Arendt, 1958a: 249.
36 Arendt, 1958a: 284; Arendt's emphasis.
37 Arendt, 1958a: 300.
38 Kant, as quoted in Arendt, 1982: 16; Kant's emphasis (cf.: Kant, 1987: 254).
39 Arendt, 1982: 59.
40 Arendt, 1982: 69.
41 She traces «the history of existential philosophy» back before Kierkegaard to Schelling; Arendt, 1994b: 163, 167–173.
42 Arendt, 1982: 61.
43 Kant, 1996: 46
44 Kant, 1997: 226
45 Arendt, 1982: 61, 60.
46 E. g. Kant, 1997: 226, 42.
47 Arendt, 1994c: 321.
48 Arendt, 1958a: 177, 189; Arendt, 1987: 39; Arendt, 2005: 126. In *On Revolution* she instead presents *principium* as the Latin analogue of *arche*; Arendt, 1965: 212–213.
49 Arendt, 2005: 45–46; Arendt, 1958a: 189–190.
50 Arendt, 1987: 39.
51 Arendt, 2005: 91.
52 Arendt, 1953a: 2.
53 Arendt, 1968a: 116.
54 Taminiaux, 2002: 26.
55 Heidegger, 1998c: 239; cf.: Heidegger, 2002b: 49; «Actuality means producedness»; Heidegger's emphasis.
56 Heidegger, 1998c: 239.
57 Arendt, 1953a: 6.
58 Arendt, 1958a: 206–207.
59 Arendt, 1978a: 62.
60 Arendt, 1978a: 61.
61 Arendt, 1968c: 76.
62 Arendt, 1978a: 123; Arendt's emphasis.
63 Mary McCarthy, then, Hannah Arendt, in Arendt, 1979: 337, 338; Arendt's emphasis.
64 Arendt, 1978a: 123–124.
65 Arendt, 2005: 24.
66 Arendt, 1982: 77; Arendt's emphasis.
67 Arendt, 1982: 77.
68 Arendt, 1982: 76; Arendt's emphasis.
69 Arendt, 2003: 61.
70 Arendt, 1982: 76.
71 Her most extended dismissal of the former is in an early review of Dewey (Arendt, 1946) and of the latter in a late footnote on Wittgenstein (Arendt, 1978b: 243–245).
72 Arendt, 1965: 195.
73 Arendt, in Arendt, Heidegger, 2004: 120.
74 Arendt, 2005: 63–65, 69.
75 Heidegger, 2002a: 12.
76 Arendt, 1968a: 137–138.
77 Arendt, 1968b: 153.
78 Pocock, 1975: 550, *passim*.
79 Arendt, 1968d: 22.

80 Arendt, 1970: 19, 12, 14; emphasis added.
81 Arendt, 1965: 239–279.
82 Arendt, 1958b.
83 Arendt, 1965: 280–281.
84 Arendt, 1972: 230–233.
85 Arendt, 1968f: 139, 143, 142, 141.
86 Arendt, 1958a: 300–301.
87 Arendt, 2005: 57, 76; Arendt, 1978a: 153; Arendt, 1968c: 82; Arendt, 1982: 54.
88 See especially Arendt, 1994b: 171.
89 Arendt, 2005: 56–59.
90 Arendt, 2005: 56.
91 Arendt, 2005: 137.
92 Arendt, in Arendt, McCarthy, 1995: 24.
93 E.g. Arendt, 1965: 102; Arendt, 2003: 89–93.
94 Arendt, 1994a: 29–30.
95 This proposition is advanced in Marx's Paris manuscripts, in the co-authored *German Ideology*, and again in Engels' *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*. It became a commonplace of orthodox Marxism.
96 Arendt, 1978b: 46; Arendt, 1978a: 153; Arendt's emphasis.
97 Arendt, 2005: 17.
98 Arendt, 1965: 64, 63.
99 Arendt, 1953a: 16–17.
100 Arendt, 1958a: 80.
101 Arendt, 1958a: 321.
102 Arendt, 1958a: 99–100; Marx's emphasis.
103 Marx, 1976: 1044; Marx's emphasis.
104 Marx, 1976: 284; cf.: Arendt, 1958a: 99.
105 See especially Arendt, 1958a: 102–103.
106 Marx, 1976: 284.
107 Marx, 1976: 1044; emphasis added.
108 Marx, 1976: 1041; Marx's emphasis (abbreviated).
109 Marx, 1978: 20.
110 Marx, 1978: 19.
111 Heidegger, 1998b: 174.
112 Heidegger, 1998c: 265.
113 Arendt, 1958a: 166.
114 Arendt, 1968d: 32, 34.
115 Heidegger, 1998c: 258–259.
116 Marx, 1974: 252–253; Marx's emphases.

ART OF LIFE AND *VITA ACTIVA*

Tomas Kačerauskas*

Abstract

The article deals with H. Arendt's concept *vita activa* regarding the connection between philosophy and existence. Existence is treated as a unit story to be inscribed in the spiritual background (*Hintergrund*) of coexistence. Philosophy as a school of existence (*ex-sistus*) is also a *technē* of this existential inscribing. According to the author, life is a stream that we order when inscribing its events into a mobile existential story that emerges in the spiritual background. The author of an existential story is creating its hero, which inspires a rebirth of the author. Such *modi* as birth and death are interconnected factors of existential creating. The death gives the wholeness to the existential creation and (re)birth gives mobility that characterizes not only the story from birth to death, but also the spiritual background in which this story is inscribed. According to the author, the birth and the death are analogous but not similar. They both interconnect in the creation of the existential story. The author develops these questions with the help of conceptual apparatus of existential phenomenology (Heidegger, Husserl) which is applied in the interpretation of H. Arendt's conception *vita activa*. The aim of the article is not only the interpretation of H. Arendt's thinking, but also the development of the phenomenology of culture as an existential creation.

Keywords: *vita activa*, *technē* of life, existential story, spiritual background, birth and death.

Introduction

The antique concept of philosophy as love of wisdom presupposes a nurture of the art (*technē*) of life. Philosophy was not only an interpretation of texts, but also a spiritual training that guided one's inner development. If we believe Plato's version, Socrates did not write on principle in order to avoid a text as an interruption of the stream of communication. In *Phaedrus* Plato pays our attention to the ambiguity of a text: it heals as a *pharmakon*, inviting to take part in the spiritual context, and poisons by blocking memory, which opens the contemplation of divine *eidos* for Plato. True life for Plato is a return to the place, from where we have sailed being in the water of forgiveness and concealment.[1] Thus a question con-

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cerning the relation between a text, remembrance and life emerges. Life is to be treated as coexistence, participation in an existential interaction, which develops in our environment of the texts, i.e. in the spiritual context. My first thesis is the following: *the art of life has been nourishing in the spiritual context, where we exist interpreting texts.* In other words, *interpretation of life as a text in spiritual context allows nourishing the hart of life.*

While interpreting a text we involve both ourselves into the co-existential context and the phenomena to be described into our life. In such a way these phenomena take part in the creation of this text. Herewith we create ourselves, our life story, which emerges in the environment of the spiritual co-existence. The art of life is inseparable from the creation of our history, which we are creating not by describing the facts of life, but interpreting phenomena as the factors of the coherent existential whole. The phenomena have been inscribing into the existential whole created by us, where we become heroes. Existence, being the whole of harmonic events created by us from birth till death, demands mastership, knowledge of *technē,* otherwise our life becomes a jumble of incoherent episodes, where only the supporting actors who do not become heroes participate. While living we write our own existential story, the hero of which is forming us, the masterful writers. Thus the conception of the art of life (*technē ton bion*), that arose in the antique philosophy, covers Heidegger's existential project (Heidegger, 1993) and Bakhtin's author's and hero's conception (Бахтин, 2000). Herewith it can help to develop the model of culture as an existential creation. Here the life and the text are not to be contradistinguished, but considered as two poles of a human creative interaction. Existence develops between the flow of life and the text to be written: life becomes ours, after we have inscribed its events into the coherent whole of our aims, senses, and images. On the other hand, this whole has been expanded every time. Life provides not only mobility for the existential project created by us. Life also guarantees an existential co-creation: on the one hand, we are writing our history together with other participants of existence, on the other hand, the co-creation emerges in the environment, which is expanded by it. Following Husserl (1952), I call this environment spiritual. That is why our mastership (*technē*) is required not only by the existential story written by us, but also by the spiritual environment created by us.

M. Aurelius (1983) wrote for himself, but it was not the registration of the fights of the defensive wars of his empire against barbarians. Often episodically in a tent between the fights, writing was a part of existential becoming for him. Everything that threatened the borders of his existential empire had to be inscribed riskily into the life's story, in order to transfer its borders. Existential imperialism, as topic of Levinas (1984) philosophizing as well, requires creative mastership. Otherwise the borders of our existential project will be abolished by barbarous components we encounter every day. The mastership of the author, who is creating a story, is analogous to heroics of its actor, with every new phenomenon barbarism becomes a part of a hero's life, which determines not only a fur-

ther course of events, but also a new link with the past phenomena already inscribed into the story. Hero in this case becomes a factor of author's existential becoming. Herewith this factor changes his entire spiritual environment. The borders of the author's existential project, his/her spiritual environment and hero's story do not coincide, instead, they have been defining every time anew when the territories limited by them are merging. Existential creation is a constant exit (*ex-sistus*) from the spiritual borders to be defined: during our life we are preparing ourselves for the great exit, after which our existential whole will further be inscribing into the empire of the spiritual environment. We should search the content of life's art namely in the technique (*technē*) of this great preparation.

Spirit (*psychē*, *spiritus*, *Geist*) forms when we as the authors of our existential project are influenced by the heroes to be created and we become the heroes to environment's co-creators. The analogy allows applying of Bakhtin's model of author and hero in the description of social reality: we are taking part in the creation of the spiritual environment *ana ton logon,* i.e. thanks to the tension between the linguistic existence and the existential language. This tension, analyzed in other works (Kačerauskas, 2007), emerges from creative activity of existential participants as co-creators of the spiritual environment. We shall see how it could be linked with Arendt's conception of *vita activa*. Social interaction as a modus of the creative activity allows considering also God as a phenomenon of the co-existence: God emerges as a factor of interaction between the linguistic existence and the existential language, a line of contact between the spiritual environment and the existential whole, when the borders of the existential environment (*logos*) are transferring. The technique of our exit (*exsistus*) as life-art is being formed in the existential environment where we were born earlier than we emerge in a physical way. In this sense we are passive participants of our environment. Levinas connects passivity with suffering in the presence of social transition. Speaking in a metaphoric (*metaphoreo* means to transfer) and Christian (transferring Levinas's thought) way, we learn life-art in the environment of Christ's suffering, which is filled with tension between our birth and death, passivity and activity. We become heroes only being involved into the movements and revolts, i.e. being born in the environments full of intranquility.

The ideas of Christianity in late antiquity are to be connected with theories of the Stoics and Epicure, while they are connected with Plato's thinking. While Christianity was spreading across the whole empire unimaginably fast, it turned Christians into the heroes, who expanded the borders of the spiritual empire that were to be transferred into barbarian territories. Baptism in a river used to mark the beginning, the birth for heroic life in new time. According to Habermas (1994), that is how modernity emerged: this concept was first mentioned in the late antiquity in order to mark Christian ideas. Baptism involves into modern Christian community which seeks for inspiration in the Script (*Logos*). This spiritualizing is connected with temporalization in a new time and embodiment, while describing new boundaries of social body. After baptism we are taking part in creation of new (modern) spiritual reality: the hero of

Christian life, created by us, creates his author, who becomes a factor of a community's creation. Plato's doctrine of participation (*methexis*) coalesces here with the idea of the singularity (*Einmaligkeit*) of birth and death, while doctrine of embodiment (incarnation) has been transferred to a new spiritual environment, where it marks belonging to spiritual community (Christ's body), although it kept the rudiments of physical rebirth (Resurrection of the bodies).

Therefore the content of the notion «spirit» has been changing under the influence of Christian impulses of the divine creation. My second thesis is the following: *our activity emerges as the creativity in the spiritual environment, co-creators of which we are.* I shall illustrate this thesis by interpreting H. Arendt's conception of *vita activa*. The third one follows from the first two by expanding them: *philosophy as the art of life is a factor of cultural creativity*. Philosophy matures and forms our life during our living. In this sense it constantly moves as interaction between a thought and life, when we become ourselves. By creating the heroes of our life story, who form us, we are taking part in the creation of the spiritual environment, which is one of our births as well. The circle (mutual interaction) of becoming of us and the spiritual environment allows speaking about spiritual imperialism: the existential creativity as a conquest of new territories and transferring of empire's borders. My interpretation of *vita activa* will be based on this warlike conception[2] of creativity, which is related to the conception of realization as temporalization, naming and embodiment. However, first of all I shall analyze, referring P. Hadot (1991), the antique attitudes of Plato, the Stoics and Epicure towards the interconnection between philosophy and life.

Antique philosophy

For Socrates, philosophy is *maieutikē technē*, i. e. it is an art of giving birth for the ideas, which were matured in the discussions of the participants of a dialogue. The role of a philosopher is here only to help interlocutors to formulate these ideas on their own. In Plato's dialogue *Meno* (1999), a young uneducated slave is able to divide the area of a square into two equal parts after being questioned by Socrates, who forced him to contradict himself. He succeeded after «these notions have just been stirred up in him, as in a dream» (1999: 85c). Furthermore, Plato asks: «is this spontaneous recovery of knowledge in him recollection?» (1999: 85d). I would interpret it as the birth of a slave for a new community that is philosophical, where the knowledge emerges in crossfire of the questions, i.e. in the spiritual fight. Remembrance (recollection) of the ideas is not transference of them as constants[3]; on the contrary, it is their trial in the middle of the life's battlefield. This allows rising an assumption about interaction between philosophical ideas and life: the ideas gain their place in the spiritual environment being influenced by a life story created by us and, vice versa, we follow them in order to reach our existential whole. I shall come back to this precondition after analyzing *Meno* in the standpoint of the author's and hero's interaction.

Like other early (and intermediate) Plato's dialogues *Meno* is doubtful because of its authority. There was a question in *Meno:* what is a virtue; and the ideas of remembrance and of interaction between wise spirit and virtue arouse. Who is the author of these ideas: Plato, Socrates or all the interlocutors (including Meno, his slave and Anytus, who later contributed to Socrate‘s death)? The above-mentioned Bakhtin's conception of interaction between author and hero presupposes that the question of idea's authorship is related to the question of a hero. The hero of the dialogue, Socrates is constantly ironic: contrary to the sophist Gorgius, he does not know what the virtue is. I shall come back to this irony later. What is important here is that Plato's theory of ideas, the part of which is doctrine of remembrance, was formed under the influence of the philosophical intranquility of his dialogue hero (Socrates); and this philosophical intranquility was embodied by Socrates' irony. On the other hand, the latter requires a spiritual environment, which consists of the considerations of other dialogue participants, who are inspired by Socrates' irony. Therefore, Plato's ideas were developed in dialectic coupling, which consisted of two circles. The big circle is that one of the dialogues of authors' and the main hero's ideas. The small circle is one of the hero's considerations. A dialogue in this case is an authored (as well heroic) text, with the help of which the spiritual context for the development of the philosophical ideas was created.

Let us get back to Socrates' irony. By stating that he does not know anything, Socrates presupposes an auxiliary role of a philosopher. Disregarding that, a philosopher helps creating the environment of thought's intranquility, spiritual context (where the ideas have been remembered) which forms an individual soul. In this way an interlocutor was born for the philosophical dialogue. In other words, he emerges anew as a member of a thinking community, being anxious about the question of virtue (in *Meno*). Being born in the context of Socrates' questions, he has been inspired for new insights. *Meno* ends with an aporia: although the practice of virtue is related with the mental education[4], it is an idea that has been inspired by God ignoring the mind[5]. How is this aporia to be solved?

The inspiration or spiritual madness (*mania*) is mentioned as well in *Phaedrus*, where Socrates' «bosom is full» and interlocutors (Socrates and Phaedrus) call one another as demonic. The participants of the philosophical dialogue are united by inspiration, «condition of madness» (1996: 266a), which helps to concentrate on «all things in common» and arise towards "true being" (1996: 249c). Therefore the participants in the philosophical environment should acknowledge that they do not know anything, i. e. to be born anew in order to expand the borders of their intellectual empire herewith the spiritual environment after they had been inspired by a flight of thought. This happens after the great and small circles of the author and the hero merge. Although the author separates himself from his «sons» (written texts), this namely allows him to take part in the inspired dialogue with them. Madness as un-reason means spiritual intranquility as un-easiness, when the empire's borders fall down after barbaric madness, after which these borders transferred even further. This is how

«all things in common» are born in the dialogue between the author and heroes. «All things in common» is the whole of ideas, which is maturing spiritual (inspired) environment for our existence, which again is *ex-sistus*, exit beyond borders inscribed sometime. Mastership is an ability to be the author of existential project to be inscribed into spiritual environment. This is a school of exit, repetition for the great exit, after it our story becomes integral («all things in common») and as such it will be inscribed into spiritual environment, where it have to be reborn for new life. This «rebirth» allows speaking about existential incarnation, which emerges in the boundaries between Platonic and Christian embodiment.

Christian embodiment and rebirth are inseparable from suffering, from the Passion. Birth in spiritual (inspired) environment, which appears earlier and continues longer than us, gives passive meaning to existence: we were born before our physical birth and we rebirth later than we die physically. On the other hand, the spiritual environment is the space of our creational activity, in which we are changing and which we change while inscribing our existential story within it. Therefore passivity and activity are two poles, and due to their anxious interaction our existential project emerges as a part of the spiritual whole. As Levinas notices, another side of passivity is suffering, although he tries to avoid Christian meaning of the Passion (bringing rebirth). Our participation in creation of our story from birth till death is full of such existentials as anxiety (*Angst*), fear (*Furcht*) (Kierkegaard, 1952), disposedness (*Befindlichkeit*) or de-distancy (*Entfernheit*) (Heidegger, 1993), all of which only push us towards the creational intranquility.

Philosophy for Socrates is giving the art of birth, which is full of tension and intranquility: during thinking, we are re-born and at the same time renew the spiritual environment, by which we are inspired. Therefore philosophy being passive is a factor, which activates environment and presupposes the mutual interaction between soul and spirit. Philosophizing as passive contemplation becomes an impulse of movement towards itself. This movement is possible only in the environment of the creative interaction between soul as a part and spirit as the whole. In other words, philosophizing allows us to be born anew, herewith giving birth to environment of our thought and action. It is environment of a spiritual fight, where our birth is determined by death. Thus life's art, *technē tōn bion* (*ars vitae*) is also a technique of the renewing of the whole of life, i. e. of the existential creation.

Existential creativity is inseparable from mortifying of the old living whole. Plato's thoughts, which have influenced Christian attitudes, had matured being influenced by the thinking of Pythagoreans. Pythagoreans raised the conception of body as a soul's grave (*sōma – sēma*) and were anxious about life's way (*bios pythagoreios*), which included also mortifying of the body. That was the preparation for the exit from the body, which was a significant, but temporary part (to be mortified), of a rebirth cycle. Having taken them from the Pythagoreans, Plato passed the conceptions of rebirth and embodiment together with a doctrine of participation (*methexis*) in a divine idea over to Christianity. But unlike Pythagoreans

he did not propose to mortify the body, which is an important factor for remembrance of the divine idea (in other words, spiritualizing the environment), even though senses are deceptive. Aristotle in *Nicomachean ethics* (1990) propagated the middle way, which would wisely combine the sensitive cognition and the voice of mind. As mentioned above, it is a dynamic (*dynamis*) way of realization (*entelecheia*), which requires our creative attempts. Heidegger realized our mortality (*Sein zum Tode*) as a factor of existential creativity. In all cases philosophy as an art of life develops in the environment of interaction between passivity (mortifying) and activity (creativity) or of tension between spiritual embodiment and body's spiritualization.

Birth (as well as death) is a factor of our existential creation. The figure of a philosopher as a midwife brought up by Socrates means our constant rebirth in the spiritual environment, which we create together with a background (*Hintergrund*) of our private heroic narrative. Our existential story and its background make up «all things in common», i. e. the existential whole, which requires our *technē* of philosophical life. Birth and death in the background of the existential creation are analogical. We do experience neither birth nor death. Despite that, they emerge as phenomena which direct and give wholeness for our existential narrative. They appear *ana ton logon*, i. e. according to *logos* of spiritual background, which provides existence with structure of unit narrative from birth till death. Life does not match with existence as birth does not with death. Existence is harmonious (although full of tension) narrative, heroes of which become not all participants of life.

Analogy of birth and death is also possible because the creative renewing is inseparable from the learning to die in the teachings of Pythagoreans and the Stoics. We are born every time when we think about our existence to death, naming death a spiritual background. Although we do not experience death, the latter emerges as an imaged reality, analogical to fiction in the literature. Used in the development of philosophy as life's art, the conception of interaction between the author and a hero allows considering philosophical works as literature, although not all works are close to Plato's dialogues, which are to be interpreted in this way. Philosophy and literature are analogical not only because they both are the works of human creation (culture). Philosophy as an art of life is *technē* of phenomena's selection and grouping into «all things in common» between birth and death. In other words, it is *technē* of the turning of chaotic flowing life into existential narrative. Existential creation is more than inscribing of facts into a diary, it is inscribing of phenomena, which interact each other, into our spiritual background, where we constantly rebirth herewith renewing our environment. Therefore analogy here means the participation of interactions in our spiritual environment, which we expand with the help of these phenomena. The vault of spiritual environment created (given birth) by us is based on the poles of embodied fiction and spiritualized body. Removing of the body would abolish the tension of phenomena's interaction, therefore would impoverish (despiritualize) our creative environment, which is always a field of fight. That is why neither

Plato nor Aristotle or Epicureans[6] ever advised to mortify the body as an analogical participant of the spiritual environment.

The body is a component of creative life, of our spiritual environment. Both birth and death are inseparable from the body, although herewith they are the factors of our becoming in a spiritual background. We are born and reborn by changing the whole of spiritual background, which we inspire by new existential story. The act of baptism embodies renewal of spiritual Christ's body by its new participant. Baptism is the birth of a child as a participant of the environment to be renewed (inspired), as well as the rebirth of the parents as spiritual environment's participants. Herewith baptism is an inscribing into metrics, creation of a text. Without it, our story would not develop; during inscribing this story, we name, spiritualize and embody our spiritual environment, where we are constantly reborn. We create our story as an interaction between living and thinking in the spiritual background. That is the interaction between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, where we are learning to die by living.

Vita activa: interaction between living and thinking

Time has come to talk about H. Arendt's conception, which I will interpret in the context of the existential creativity. H. Arendt's *vita activa* includes work, production and action (*Handeln*).[7] Work emerges here as cultivation, falling into the spiritual environment. Production emerges as *Her-stellen,* exposition in the general environment. Therefore action as creative mobility is inseparable from passivity, being in the background of creation.

We are taking part in the political life, herewith we are creating it. Existential creativity has been supported by us as *animal laborans* and *politikon zōon* Therefore we have a fight's world, which pulsates by interaction between the personal and the public life. Here K. Schmitt (1963) is to be remembered, for whom politics included the war state. Ch. Mouffe (1993) continued this thought: our political environment is a live background of a thought's fight. In the context of existential creation we talk about intensive spiritual environment, inspired by which we fight back our existential whole. Tension between private and public planes fills up the spiritual world created by us, where the inspirations are embodied and bodies are spiritualized. This happens as a fight between a part (our existential story) and the whole (spiritual background) when we fight back the new phenomena over and over, as well the territories, which compose with previous «all things in common». This imperialism presupposes our existential rebirth as a challenge for the spiritual background, which borders are constantly being exploded.

H. Arendt speaks about impoverishing of polyphonic environment, when only one aspect dominates in mass society and variety of perspectives diminishes in political life.[8] Therefore, it is important to be anxious about the spirit of fight and environment full of tension in order for our constant to be reborn within it. It corresponds to Mouffe's anxiety about

saving manifold and colorful public life, in which we are fighting for our identity, i.e. we are writing our story.

Therefore only private life robs the human's things as audible and visible reality in the common world of things, which differ and bind, i.e. it robs "all things in common"[9] to be created by us. Differences and bonds give a meaning to our *vita activa* as the creational existence, which unfolds in common spiritual world of a body and a thought, private and public spheres, things and God. *Vita activa* appear as intranquility (*Unruhe*), *nec-otium*, *a-scholia* (1960: 21), which stimulates to search for a new harmony of spiritual world as the environment of our becoming. For a creative *homo faber* the world becomes a place for realization of phenomena, when we embody our goals and spiritualize the body's heroic movement towards death.

> «Von solchen Heldentaten ist allerdings faktisch in dem täglichen Kleinkampf, den der menschliche Körper um die Erhaltung und Reinhaltung der Welt zu führen hat, wenig zu spüren; die Ausdauer, deren es bedarf, um jeden Tag von Neuem aufzuräumen, was der gestrige Tag in Unordnung gebracht hat, ist nicht Mut, und es ist nicht Gefahr, was diese Anstrengung so mühevoll macht, sondern ihre endlose Wiederholung. Die "Arbeiten" des Herkules haben mit allen Heldentaten gemein, daß sie einmalig sind» (1960: 92).

Realization, embodiment and spiritualization occur here as cultivation, which requires our heroic endurance for fighting back a new spiritual environment. Arendt mentions infinite repetition for cultivation of yesterday's chaos. Our work is cherishing of life's technique in order to realize death. Arendt does not say anything about the coupling of life and death, which provides mobility[10] to our world. We prepare ourselves to die by inscribing death as a real phenomenon into our life's story, into bio-graphy[11], by means of our works we become ourselves. Existential analogy (coupling) between writing and life allows speaking about context of the spiritual world to be created by us, i. e. about the coexistence towards death.

Conclusions or Existence as Creation

Philosophy as the art of life presupposes existence as creation. We exist while we, with the help of philosophy, inscribe phenomenon of life into the existential story created by us from birth until death. Thus life's stream assumes an order, which is analogous to the spiritual background, where our existential project is being realized. Analogy here means mutual interaction in the whole of the linguistic existence and the existential language, in which we revive every time while herewith renewing it. Both birth and death are the factors of the existential creation: death provides the wholeness to our existential story and birth (revival) provides mobility and newness, when it is inscribed into the spiritual background of the coexistence.

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1 Let us remember Heidegger's existential truth as aletheia, i.e openness. True, according to Heidegger, this truth is to be sought in the thinking before Socrates, actually, before Plato.

2 Com. Aristotle's entelecheia as realization and dynamis as mobility in Metaphysics (1924).

3 Aristotle in Metaphysics interprets Plato's ideas as the static units.

4 «All other things hang upon the soul and the things of the soul itself hang upon wisdom, if they are to be good» (Платон, 1999: 88e).

5 «Virtue is neither natural nor acquired but it is an instinct given by God to the virtuous. Nor is the instinct accompanied by reason» (Платон, 1999: 99e).

6 Body, for Plato, is a medium, in which an idea is recognized; body for Aristotle is a factor of happiness; for Epicureans it is a factor of friendship.

7 «Mit dem Wort Vita activa sollen im Folgenden drei menschliche Grundtätigkeiten zusammengefaßt werden: Arbeiten, Herstellen und Handeln» (1960: 14).

8 «Eine gemeinsame Welt verschwindet, wenn sie nur noch unter einem Aspekt gesehen wird; sie existiert überhaupt nur in der Vielfalt ihrer Perspektiven» (1960: 57).

9 «Nur ein Privatleben führen heißt in erster Linie, in einem Zustand leben, in dem man bestimmter, wesentlich menschlicher Dinge beraubt ist. Beraubt nämlich der Wirklichkeit, die durch das Gesehen- und Gehörtwerden entsteht, beraubt einer 'objektiven', d. h. gegenständlichen Beziehung zu anderen, die sich nur dort ergeben kann, wo Menschen durch die Vermittlung einer gemeinsamen Dingwelt von anderen zugleich getrennt und mit ihnen verbunden sind, beraubt schließlich der Möglichket, etwas zu leisten, das beständiger ist als das Leben» (1960: 57–58).

10 «Geburt und Tod setzen die Welt voraus, nämlich etwas, das nicht in stetiger Bewegung ist, etwas, dessen Dauerhaftigkeit und relative Beständigkeit An-

kunft und Aufbruch ermöglichen, das also jeweils schon da war und nach jedem jeweiligen Verschwinden fortbesetzen wird» (1960: 89).

11 «Das Hauptmerkmal des menschlichen Lebens, dessen Erscheinen und Verschwinden weltliche Ereignisse sind, besteht darin, daß es selbst aus Ereignissen sich gleichsam zusammensetzt, die am Ende als eine Geschichte erzählt werden können, die Lebensgeschichte, die jedem menschlichen Leben zukommt und die, wenn sie aufgezeichnet, also in eine Bio-graphie verdinglicht wird, als ein Weltding weiter bestehen kann. Von diesem Leben, von dem bios zum Unterschied vom zōē, hat Aristoteles gemeint, daß es 'eine praxis ist'» (1960: 89–90)

TWO APPROACHES TO THE TRADITION IN HANNAH ARENDT'S WORKS

Piotr Nowak*

Abstract

From the Latin «colere» which means «to take care», «to look after», «to protect» Arendt derives the notion of culture. Culture designates a safe and friendly place, a place that is easy to live in. The ancient Romans designed this place with piousness, care, and devoutness. But Arendt dealt with another dimension of culture, namely, a Greek one and the ancient Greeks didn't care for tradition as the Romans understood it. They usually started from scratch. They believed that the love of beautiful things and beautiful ideas is possible only through spontaneous interaction with them and were self-made people. They did not imitate the canon because there was no such a canon and therefore they did not need the blessings of any future or past generations. It is not an accident that Plato corrected the poets in his Republic because tradition appeals to us while it is still valid for us and not sacred in itself. Tradition cannot be a storage box filled with mementos and memories. Hereafter we have two distinct concepts of tradition: the Greek one, which is active, creative, original, and forceful and the Roman concept, which is passive and receptive. In my paper, I would like to discuss these two notions of culture and the way Arendt dealt with them.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, culture, tradition, the ancient Greeks, the Romans.

I

Her eight exercises on political philosophy, Arendt begins with the recall of Franz Kafka's novel – «Er» (he). In his life the main protagonist is striving against two forces. One of them pushes him in his back and invades him from the past (and to some extent it is something already known to him); the second one is the enigmatic obstacle in fulfillment of future projects. Hence, «Er» is the object of influence of two powerful elements: the past and the future that ruthlessly pressurize him. If he wants to save his independence, his freedom he has to fight against the element of time which is «grammatically unqualified» (it is the teaching Arendt provides, Kafka – to the contrary – persuades *Er* to escape, and withdraw from the frontline of both powers to take stand of an independent arbiter). It

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is not difficult to guess that «Er» is simply every one of us, that the past and the future constitute border conditions of our existence.

> «The first thing to be noticed is that not only the future – <the wave of the future> – but also the past is seen as a force, and not, as nearly all our metaphors, as a burden (that) man has to shoulder and of whose dead weight the living can or even must get rid (of) in their march into the future… This past, moreover, reaching all the way back into the origin, does not pull back but presses forward, and it is, contrary to what one would expect, the future which drives us beck into the past».[1]

Living between past and future, being in permanent fight with both modalities, a person takes undefined and atemporal place. But one cannot live outside the time! For this reason – making our life choices – we are forced to refer to our tradition. We can do this in two ways: Romanian and Greek. The Romanian approach to tradition is near to idolatry or blind adoration of the past. Maiores – those who are greater than we are gave us the sacred fire of tradition, which we have to blow up and keep it alive. The sacred truth is always behind us and thanks to its light we are able to see the way on which we are strutting. Live memory of the past allows us to take part in the «big renovation», allows us to set from the very beginning the new order – of the city, of the Academy, of the State, of the Church – it depends on what event we consider fundamental. In this way we participate in «the miracle of the durable existence». In ancient Rome the values like tradition, authority, and religion were tied up together. To shake one of them meant a collapse of two others. For the Romanians the ancient Greece was an arche (the very beginning and the power as well) of the all things that are valid (like thinking, culture, religion). And it is because of the Romanian adoration of the Greek tradition that we – the contemporaries – can also deal with it.

> «Without Rome's sanctification of foundation as a unique event, Greek civilization, including Greek philosophy, would never have become the foundation of a tradition, though it might have been preserved through the efforts of scholars in Alexandria in nonbinding, non obliging manner. Our tradition, properly speaking, begins with the Roman acceptance of Greek philosophy as the unquestionable, authoritative binding foundation of thought, which made it impossible for Rome to develop a philosophy, even o political philosophy, and therefore left its own specifically political experience without adequate interpretation».[2]

Not far from the Roman understanding of tradition there is its Greek equivalent. It is an agonistical one, expressed in a total disrespect for the norms, ideas, for the whole material culture that is inherited from the ancestors.

> «Plato's violent treatment of Homer, who at the time had been consider the <educator of Hellas> for centuries, is for us still the most magnificent sign of a culture aware of its past without any sense of the binding authority of tradition».[3]

The Greeks always started everything anew, beginning from themselves. They coped with tradition only by permanent revision of petrified forms. They did not care about it. It was rather like Penelope's fabric, they tore it apart to sew it again. For sure, they raped the tradition – they didn't know another way. Let's take an example. Almost all of the philosophical handbooks I've ever seen spin a yarn about transcendent theory of ideas that are eternal measure for the world; that the world – temporary, contingent, nonsolid, and material – is their mere reflection. According to this interpretation, there exists only that what is eternal, invisible and beyond the world; and that there doesn't exist anything what seems to exists, what one can smell, touch, or taste. What nonsense! Yet, «the good as such», as well as «the good in itself», or «the good for itself» doesn't exist. The good is the earthly invention or it does not exist at all.

> «The notion of good (*agathos*) has no connection here with what we mean by goodness in absolute sense; it means exclusively *good-for*, beneficial or useful (*chresimon*), and is therefore unstable and accidental since it is not necessarily what it is but can always be different».[4]

Plato's idea is not good from the outer space. Its sense should be permanently negotiated, considered «for the sake of». I'm talking here about conversation (*dialeghestai*), which is not an empty rhetoric or persuasion, but which is a dialogue. One reaches the truth «throughout the reason», dia-logos, through the conflict of claims, through the diversity of perspectives. The transcendental truth is the enemy of the appearance and perspective, and the one who demands it, in the same way tries to destroy human life, to sacrifice it on the altar of invisible reality. So, are the ideas of goodness, truth, justice mere arbitral conventions? Only in the narrow sense.

The world is not unanimous and we cannot extort unanimity from it. Community of equal people is not based on forgetting of the differences but on their artificial leveling. Let's imagine a group of people where each person understands the good and justice differently than others. One can say that only in a discussion, or during a quarrel (agon) particular ideas appear. This activity (it doesn't matter if it is action or thinking) is not good or bad as such. It is good or bad «for the sake of».

> «Only in such a manifold can one and the same topic appear in its full reality, whereby what must be borne in mind is that every topic has as many sides and can appear in as many perspectives as there are people to discuss it».[5]

It does not mean that platonic ideas are conventions, the result of agreement which, with a mood swing, shall be changed or canceled. Only during permanent conversation discussed ideas draw in solidity, become tradition to which one can always appeal to, or if it is necessary, to shake it off or amend it (as Plato «corrected» Homer). But the same ideas that first were the object of discussion then became the object of agreement

now are «transcendent», which means that they oblige us unconditionally. Once again: there are no ideas free from human stain. Each idea, each perspective is burdened with human evaluation, prejudice, gossip. Therefore, one has to check continuously their sense and verify credibility.

II

It is such a long time we've been *Romans* now, that we finally forgot about it; never questioning the nature of our antiquary life experience – concerning ourselves and our world. The values that allowed the Romans to remember about tradition, to look after it, and take care of it, turned out to be the empty boxes, the boxes first obviously plundered and deprived of their valuable treasures. Or quite on the contrary: these boxes were filled with bizarre lumber, requisites that reflect the human past.

Can we turn back the time and start pretending that tradition is still important to us? Can we think about ourselves differently than in quotation marks? No, we cannot. – Arendt has this to say. It would be a consequence of bad faith, a result of admiring rubbish that pretends to be the tradition. So, in this sense – what does it mean to «shake off» tradition and when does it appear? Does it happen when the old and saint notions lack their power and authority? Not necessarily.

> «The end of a tradition does not necessarily mean that traditional concepts have lost their power over the minds of men. On the contrary, it sometimes seems that this power of well-worn notions and categories becomes more tyrannical as the tradition loses its living force and as the memory of its beginning recedes; it may even revel its coercive force only after its end has come and men no longer even rebel against it».[6]

Nietzsche, Marx, Kierkegaard – the three great 19th century demystificators of the tradition recognize in their works its twilight. They pushed away the past which pressed on them, albeit at the same time they were half in its grave. Kierkegaard who brings doubts into faith (although he still believes); Marx who overcomes the theory (philosophy) in favor of the praxis (although he still philosophizes); Nietzsche who votes for life for the sake of will to power (although it is a reversal of Platonism). This all, according to Arendt, could be a great opportunity for us. Behind this great revaluation of the traditional contents and values «is the great chance to look upon the past with eyes undistracted by any tradition, with a directness which has disappeared from Occidental reading and hearing ever since Roman civilization submitted to the authority of Greek thought»[7]. Following her German masters, Arendt stakes on the conflict, incites conflicting interpretations; and extends her own perspective.

To sum up. «Colere» in Latin means «take care», «look after». From this word Arendt derives the notion of culture – the place which is safe and proper to live. In ancient Rome culture and tradition guarantied good life. One cultivated it with pietism and delicacy. The Greek civilization mix, mainly philosophy, art and politics, was taken by the Romans as a norm which was unconditionally obliging to them.

> «… the great Roman reverence for the testimony of the past as a such, to which we owe not merely the preservation of the Greek heritage but the very continuity of tradition, was quite alien to them».[8]

The Greeks didn't care about their own tradition, because they reached everything on their own and from the very beginning. They believed that love of beautiful things and beautiful ideas demands praxis, practical application; at least not less active than creating new ones. In other words, they were self-sufficient. They did not imitate the cannon (there was not any cannon by the way), they didn't need any blessing of future generations. They simply hesitated to look for "tradition" beyond them – in a distant past or in unpredictable future. The whole tradition contained affirmation of their power, in the affirmative «I want this!» No doubt, there was a genius of artists behind this. Therefore one can assume that the Greeks gave more than took from the world, which was a simple consequence of the surplus of forms of their life; the consequence of cultural luxury and magnanimity. If the meaning of tradition lies in unifying the past and the present into one living system, tradition has to use violence in order to destroy its old forms in favor of the new ones. For the Roman epigones tradition seemed to be something different. According to them, one could cope with tradition only through others' eyes. While the Greeks were thinking, creating beauty, fundaments of political philosophy, the Romans merely quoted them; they collected their wise sayings, and imitated their wisdom never adding anything new.

Hence we have two models of approaching tradition – the Greek one: active, creative, original, and forceful – on the one hand, and the Roman one: non-active, wholly receptive – on the other hand. In the long run, it was the latter that won. Roman experience was imitated for such a long time and up to the limits that it finally resulted in a disaster of all this immediacy. As the time went by once alive events lost much of their strength. Step by step they were replaced by legends, gossips, and prejudice which were used to fade contrast and muffle constant buzz. Then, moving the politics into the sphere of household put Greek hierarchy up side down. The Eternal City was replaced by the Eternal Church; a truly free person was the one who refused to be engaged in politics and whose freedom was limited to privacy, etc.

Today one cannot pretend that everything is fine – «one more century and even pure spirit will start stinking» (to quote Nietzsche). The traditional philosophy doesn't offer any solution. Only its great destroyers, its active apostates are still trying to take new, dangerous, and sometimes hopeless paths. Nietzsche who philosophizes with a hammer in order to revaluate all values; Marx who brings to us the self-interpretation of a human being as the *animal laborans*; Kierkegaard who calls for dignity of faith in spite of modern tendencies of the contemporary world. Facing all those destroyers, Arendt tries her own way of thinking. One can say that throughout her works she is constantly trying to shake off tradition in order to show the risk that such a break could bring. At the same time she tries to stitch up those tears that appeared on the solid body of tra-

dition, she tries to resist – even in herself – the all-encompassing abyss. Arendt oscillates between a Roman antique shop with souvenirs (where she is drawn by Walter Benjamin) and original Greek thinking (to which she is prompted by Martin Heidegger). The true greatness of Arendt is that she chooses neither of these ways, and finally she retreats into the narrow gap between these two models of culture, the burst between the past and the future.

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4 Ibid, p. 7.

5 Ibid, p. 169.

6 Arendt (1977), op. cit., p. 26.

7 Ibid, p. 28–29.

8 Ibid, p. 213.

HANNAH ARENDT AND THE MYTH OF FREEDOM

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Abstract

Hannah Arendt understood political freedom as the understanding of a plurality of free individuals acting to shape their world in a public space. In order to reach this goal, there needs to be positive examples in history. Arendt considered the American Revolution to be just such an instance. This is the ideal type of a revolution: Men create a new beginning through joint political action. In the interest of not allowing this event in the history of mankind to be forgotten and so that it is present to be used for navigation in the future, it must be idealized and exalted. It must be newly recounted so that the collective memory can be anchored within a community. Hannah Arendt wanted to thereby be active in endowing the western world with her «myth of freedom». This «myth of freedom» is no longer supported. Is it possible to bring the «myth of freedom» back to life according to Hannah Arendt's ideas? Which narrative can we use to base our thoughts of freedom on today?

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, political philosophy, political action, American Revolution, political freedom.

For Hannah Arendt «the *raison d'être* of politics [was] freedom»[1], and she believed that freedom is an essentially political phenomenon which is to be experienced neither by the will, nor by the act of thinking, but only by acting[2]. Consequently «to be free and to act are the same» [3]. «To be free is to be able to practice freedom».[4] She thus transposed the political realm from human nature to human acting, in the space between the people.[5] For Arendt our humanity is revealed in the various modalities of action, not in being but in doing:[6] Political actions are realised in their dynamic in the mutual public communication.[7] «We first become aware of freedom or its opposite in our intercourse with others, not in the intercourse with ourselves».[8] People only can be free in relation to each other, thus only in the realms of the political and action; only there do they learn what freedom positively means and that it is more than freedom from force.[9] If people may not freely and openly communicate with each other, then there is no longer the political realm of freedom. As for her this was solely a question of the human situation in modern times, she was able to confine

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herself to the *Vita activa* [The Human Condition]; the *Vita contemplativa* alongside the dimensions of freedom, which she assigned to the area of «metaphysical concern with eternity»[10] and as such it is left out all considerations.[11] Arendt wanted to explicitly unhinge the concept of freedom from its apolitical Christian roots as an individual ability in the sense of free will and to make freedom the epitome of political life in the form of the human predicate of action and ability.[12]

Hannah Arendt advanced to her second great political theme political freedom as the actual human way of life, which is hindered by totalitarianism. Unlike many of her contemporaries Hannah Arendt held the position that freedom is not developed in the private realm but rather politically and at the same time individually. This is regarded by many as an anachronistic, backward-looking or utopian opinion.[13] With her notion that free action is in principle detached from nothing, she was in conflict with the contemporary theories of society and exposed herself to the accusation of a pre-modern, almost mythical way of thinking.[14] According to Arendt human freedom is expressed in that humans are in the position to discontinue current structures or processes, but also to preserve continuity. For Arendt political freedom is constituted by the ability of a plurality of people to act together in the public sphere despite their various differences.[15] A plurality of humans freely associate with each other and is at pains to ensure the well being of the community in public speech and opposition. In her second main political work *The Human Condition* Arendt asks what conditions must be fulfilled in order to realise a humane i. e. a liberal humane world and to organise it so that it lasts. She differentiated between a private and public sphere,[16] which gained her much criticism, especially from the feminist arena. Arendt's most criticised sentence reads, «Women and slaves belonged to the same category and were hidden away not only because they were somebody else's property but because their life was 'laborious', devoted to bodily functions»[17]. It is only the modern society, which «no longer believes that bodily functions and material concerns should be hidden»[18]. Such statements are not to be understood as a description of historical processes but in them values are expressed, which comprise of a nostalgic look at the Old World of the Greek polity before Plato. The private realm, which she also called «the realm of the hidden»[19], suffers devaluation in as far as it is connected to the preservation of life. However, only liberation from these necessary activities allows the human to engage in the public realm. On the other hand Arendt emphasised that the resulting pressure from the liberation from vital necessities, «from the standpoint of the public realm and a deprivation of freedom»[20] protects the human from apathy and constantly compels them to new initiatives. The necessities of life trigger action impulses, consequently the behaviour, which is of great importance for Arendt's understanding of freedom, even if under other signs, namely that of a spontaneous action in freedom. She clearly sees that where the urge of the necessary weakens, «the distinguishing line between freedom and necessity» blurs, but still wants to hang on.[21] But is it possible to dif-

ferentiate between the driving force of human actions between actions that arise from freedom and actions that are born of necessity?

It has often been criticised that Arendt in a sort of history of decay had criticised the lapse of the public political life and mourns the «rise of the social»[22]. Seyla Benhabib doubts the capacity of Arendt's differentiation between social and political life, thus she recommends relating these rather to the attitude than the contents of the purpose area.[23] It is also put into question, whether Arendt's concept of the public sphere does justice to the sociological complexity and the dissimilitude of modern institutes.[24]

A plurality of people in the public sphere, who respect each other and reach agreements as equals, is for Arendt the qualitative opposite of the unformed masses. According to her conviction the modern «mass society not only destroys the public realm but the private as well»[25]. Under the economic and social conditions of the modern age politics runs the risk of losing its freedom and its raison d'être as the constructive cooperation of a plurality of people, and this process may go as far as to the destruction of all politics in the totalitarian systems. However, her response to the «highly atomised mass society», the isolation and absence of normal social relations of the uprooted and unattached faceless human is not the commitment of the individual to the state and its homogeneous national community. This form of mass equality offers the best opportunity for the establishment of a dictatorship.[26] In fact, the difference between the individuals should remain in order to allow for the possibility of spontaneity, which is understood as the potential for liberal action. For Arendt the modern media world as well as the burocratisation and professionalisation of politics are some of the dangers to the public sphere.[27] They destroy the free communication process among the people. These are theses, which were rekindled Communitarianism 20 years later.[28]

For Arendt National Socialism was not marked by a total politicisation of life, but rather by the complete de-politicisation of life because National Socialism aimed at destroying all political elements of freedom, in particular the ability to act in freedom.[29] Total authority finds ways to integrate people in the flow of history, so that it no longer prevents this flow, but rather reinvents itself as a moment of acceleration.[30] These means are the «force of terror», which works externally and the «the force of ideologically consistent thinking», which comes from the inside.[31] However, freedom is not only destroyed by dictatorships, but is in decline everywhere, where the concept of politics is replaced either by the concept of society or by the concept of history.[32] As soon as the idea gains ground, that the freedom of the people «is to be sacrificed to historical development»[33] because humans, who act in freedom hinder these developments, political freedom, i.e. the joint action of a multiplicity of people, is immediately jeopardised because «a multiplicity of people are fused into one single individual»[34]. To feel secure in this one mass, which is fused together, and to relinquish one's own freedom of social action in favour of the supposed necessity of history is one of the dangerous attempts of the political co-existence of present times.

According to Arendt the ability of freedom as a mutual political action is expressed in making a start and perhaps creating something new, thus to acquire the world anew with new senses[35], or even more: «to establish the world anew»[36]. This is where her understanding of the modern revolutions as an identity process of freedom and action comes into play. According to Arendt mankind has always known that there are two aspects of freedom: a negative aspect, namely freedom from external force and a positive aspect, i. e. freedom of action to be able to realise the «I can».[37] In the consciousness of the revolutionists negative and positive freedom have always been connected. *Rebellion* illustrates the starting point of the revolutionary process and is closely linked to the concept of negative freedom.[38] Positive liberation i. e. the establishment of a realm, where freedom may appear in the words and deeds of free men, follows from negative liberation from necessity[39]. The actual goal of a revolution, which always inherits an «element of novelty»[40], is the reestablishment of freedom. The revolution inherits «natality», *«Gebürtlichkeit»* and the connected surprise element of «miracles».[41]

Following Max Weber, Arendt sought to conceptualise an ideal type of revolution, which comes close to the real type of American Revolution that she overestimated. The referral to the Roman Republic and the Greek polity – both central ideals in Arendt's thinking – is an important reason for the ideal composition of the political sphere which was created as a result of the American Revolution. Thanks to the American Revolution she already sees an important reason for the ideal composition of the political sphere in its referral to the Roman Republic and the Greek polity as examples. In *Sachverstand und Politik* she remarked that it would be a great mistake if we solely based our perception of freedom and free society on what we have known in the last hundred or hundred and fifty years and even worse if we base it on the party system, which, if one looks more closely at history, has never functioned.[42] Her critical stance towards the party system corresponded to her favour for the council system.[43] The great enthusiasm for the council can only be explained in the fact that «every individual found his own sphere of action and could behold, as it were, with his own eyes his own contribution to the events of the day»[44]. Or as she writes in another paragraph:

> «Political freedom … means the right 'to be a participator in government', or it means nothing».[45]

According to Arendt the institution of the political freedom as worthwhile constitutive principle of human cohabitation does not allow it to be based on private and economic interests, which the failed Weimar party state illustrates.[46] According to her conviction the politics of interests leads to the politics of power, the violent rule of people over others and eventually to the destruction of political freedom. Additionally the institution of political freedom requires an anchor on the other side of human limitations, in order to ensure the immortality of the whole body[47]. Since it excludes transcendent instances the codification of freedom in the form of the constitution forms the final instance. In 1971 she spoke of «belief in

the constitution»[48]. Nevertheless this is not a consequence of every revolution, the constitution from the French Revolution[49] just as the German constitution of 1918 does not appear to afford timeless codification of freedom. According to Arendt the majority of revolutions, including the Russian Revolution, must fail because they are concerned with the social aspect instead of the political aspect, thus their issues are not worth a public debate.[50] Being dominated by the social question, the revolutions lost sight of their actual purpose, namely freedom. Arendt's concept of freedom is not based on the issue of socially fair distribution[51], her chief concern is political not social equality. She did not believe that the social question could be resolved politically but rather economically. A justified objection counters that social problems are often actual political problems and that the question, whether it deals with a social or political problem, in many cases is itself a political question.[52] However, Arendt never corrected herself.[53] For her among all the revolutions, perhaps excluding the tragically failed Hungarian revolution,[54] there was only one exception: the American Revolution.[55] If one does not regard the situation of the slaves, poverty here was hardly an issue. However, she saw the political danger of poverty:

> «The political trouble, which misery of the people holds in store is that manyness can in fact assume the guise of oneness...».[56]

In her essay, written in 1975 *200 Jahre Amerikanische Revolution* (200 years since the American Revolution) she wrote that «the American institutions of freedom, which were established 200 years ago, have existed much longer than any other comparable glorious period of history. These highlights of human history have justifiably become paradigms of our tradition of political thinking. ... As highlights they continue to live to enlighten the actions and thoughts of people in dark times»[57]. For her the American Revolution represented one of those very seldom historical moments, in which one joint supranational world is actually constructed. For Arendt in contrast to other revolutions the American Revolution is in itself an expression of freedom. In her eagerness to glorify this revolution she awarded it the attribute of non-violence, a characterisation, whose empirical soundness is vehemently doubted.[58] Additionally she proved uncertain regarding the attributes of a real revolution. In her book *On Revolution*[59] she explicitly named violence as a characteristic of a true revolution. She wrote:

> «...only where change occurs in the sense of a new beginning, where violence is used to constitute an altogether different form of government, to bring about the formation of a new body politic, where the liberation from oppression aims at least at the constitution of freedom can we speak of revolution».[60]

In contrast, in *Macht und Gewalt* she emphasised that violence in the form of wars and revolutions must not be the only possibility to stop historical processes.[61]

It was important for Arendt that humans do not function according to a stimulus-reaction scheme, but remain unpredictable in their actions. Arendt ascribed this ability to constantly act on new initiatives to the possibility of human action. If the historical process in its continuity and discontinuity is not understood as the result of joint actions of humans but as the development and the meeting of external, sub and super human powers, then the human race has turned away from history[62] in favour of a transdescental reality or world spirit. In all the differences Arendt[63] converges in her rejection of Romantic philosophy, but also in her educational pathos, with Isaiah Berlin[64] and Karl Popper[65]. The human being is the one who acts and who is responsible for his actions, not any power outside himself. As soon as humanity is no longer the ruler of history changes become so «improbable» that all great events appear as miracles.[66] The modern political freedom, which is associated with human rights[67], did not originate from «the freedom of Christians», which was given by God[68]. That is exactly how Arendt read the American Declaration of Independence, in which it states:

> «We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness».[69]

In the American Declaration of Independence from the 4th July 1776 or in the correspondence between Jefferson and Adams Arendt believed to perceive those «rare moments in history»[70] in which political freedom was visible. Paralysed forms are broken through without violence as a result of the power of human actions[71] and existing conditions change. Arendt believed this new style American freedom was established for its own sake, it constitutes an immortal, i. e. a permanent political sphere, in which human mortality is annulled. For Arendt the new type of positive freedom, established by the Founding Fathers, wins precisely through the until then absent, the new and the unexpected a creative quality, which the person in his ability to achieve formally ennobles. This side of the human being, namely his freedom to achieve something completely new, was discovered during and thanks to the revolution. Therefore the revolution plays such an important role: as the promoter of the rediscovery of the human ability to a new form of freedom. This positive freedom to do something novel is for Arendt the essence of being free. However, she was preceded by the most primary gesture of freedom, the freedom to be able to leave a place or oppressive conditions, in the sense of liberation.[72] While the negative liberation from something within a given form of government may occur, the positive freedom, as the American Revolution illustrated, according to Arendt «necessitated the formation of a new, or rather rediscovered form of government; it demanded the constitution of a republic»[73]. Only in the execution of their struggle for the liberation did the revolutionaries experience freedom. They discovered what it is not only to be free but also to act in freedom.

«For the acts and deeds which liberation demanded from them threw them into public business, where, intentionally or more often unexpectedly, they began to constitute that space of appearances where freedom can unfold its charms and become a visible, tangible reality».[74]

In this process they created a «body politic which guarantees the space where freedom can appear»[75]. In the republic an action is possible as an expression of freedom. Because freedom in the execution of the action is a goal in itself, the actions of humans, who want to be free, must always be exercised. In order to avoid the loss of this revolutionary spirit of freedom of the Founding fathers, this spirit is to be preserved in a new political sphere. In this secured sphere guaranteed by the constitution – more in the declaratory part than in the organisational part[76], a passion for political freedom must be able to survive[77]. These are conditions, which according to Arendt's conviction the American Revolution was unable to create. The constitution concerns the contents of the treaty, the securing of the spirit of the founders and the act of the treaty. The latter is an alliance between people and «gathers together the isolated strength of the allied partners and binds them into a new power structure by virtue of 'free and sincere promises'»[78]. The civilised society in the spirit of the act of foundation is to be preserved by not using the developed structures of power against the constitution. The thought of the promise on the one hand allows plurality, but on the other hand the unpredictability of actions. Arendt separates the power, which has come to be through an alliance of the free, from the dominance and violence against the masses: «under the condition of human plurality can never amount to omnipotence» [79], the assistance of many and various is therefore a guarantor for the conservation of freedom. Although power is a fixed part of political coexistence, it may not be understood as a fixed possession but rather ends as soon as the people no longer act jointly and disband.[80]

«Power is the only human attribute which applies solely to the worldly in-between space by which men are mutually related».[81]

This in-between space draws on the basis of legitimating of the act of foundation and on the ability to be able to make a new start, not as Arendt emphasised on «the belief in an immortal Legislator, or the promises of reward and the threats of punishment in a 'future state', or even the doubtful self-evidence of the truths enumerated in the Declaration of Independence»[82]. Thus in contrast to the Declaration of Independence Arendt wanted to do without the coverage in form of natural justice or metaphysics and wanted – with the help of institutions, in her example the Senate and the constitutional courts – to create[83] «the perpetual state»[84]. Although according to Arendt the founding spirit of the American Revolution has not been successfully conserved.[85] However, these problems are shared by the founders of all immanent and transcendental institutions.

In both cases it concerned the protection of experienced events. According to Arendt the establishment of freedom must be remembered in

order to face the «amnesia», which she diagnosed in the USA after the Second World War.

> «Fear of revolution has been the hidden leitmotif of post-war American foreign policy in its desperate attempts at a stabilisation of the status quo, with the result that American power and prestige were used and misused to support obsolete and corrupt political regimes that long since had become object of hatred and contempt among their own citizens».[86]

This amnesia leads to «fear of revolution», a stabilisation of the *status quo* and a catastrophic lack of the power of judgement.[87] In order to challenge the process of the loss of freedom Arendt pleaded for a culture of remembrance. As an example of such a culture of remembrance she mentioned the Biblical exodus storys, which in the American tales actually played a supporting role,[88] and «Vergil's story of the wanderings of Aeneas after he had escaped burning Troy»[89]. The historical significance of both legends «lies in how the human mind attempted to solve the problem of the beginning, of an unconnected, new event breaking into the continuous sequence of historical time»[90].

> «Both are legends of liberation, the one of liberation from slavery and the other of escape from annihilation, and both stories are centred about a future promise of freedom, the eventual conquest of a promised land or the foundation of a new city...»[91]

The forty year journey through the dessert and Aeneas' odyssey form a temporary abyss between the old and the new. This is the time, in which the people have the chance to use their ability to start something new. They must provide their own freedom and make their own absolute beginning.[92] It is the question of the liberation from oppression and the establishment of freedom as a lasting and tangible reality.[93] The human, who is existentially predestined, makes a new beginning himself, not an otherworldly creator.[94]

Similar to ancient and biblical tales Arendt wanted to introduce the American Revolution as a modern secular legend of foundation in the free world and retrieve this "lost treasure"[95] of the revolutionary tradition for her contemporaries. It is a question of, in sense of Walter Benjamin of original phenomena, forms of public freedom, which are solely waiting to be saved from the continuity of the past.[96] It depends just as little as with the Exodus or the story of Aeneas on the historical fact, incidentally a reason why the fundamental study of Arendt's blatantly shortened and misinterpretation of the American Revolution hardly plays a role in her matter of concern.[97] Certainly, she exposed herself with this action to the criticism of only wanting to replace the old transcendental myths with a new inherent myth, the freedom myth characterised by America.

In order to keep this freedom myth alive a culture of remembrance is required, which firmly anchors any events in consciousness, through a permanent process of communication, i.e. a dialogue between the people, through a historiography that forms legends and through a «reification»

in the form of ideas.[98] The mutual dialogue on a formative event forms a bulwark against forgetting and keeps present what one has not experienced, the unseen and the not current: remembrance, Mnemosyne, the mother of the muses and arts, may linguistically be so concentrated that the thought changes into something, which is immediately firmly anchored in the memory.[99] Thus a certain matter of memory is ascribed a particular importance; it is used in a way to create a certain meaning. Arendt pleaded for the spirit of the foundation of freedom, as it took shape in history or rather in the historical legend of the American Revolution to become the core of the «cultural memory»[100] of a community of the free and to develop a corresponding normative historical consciousness. Following the Jewish tradition and additionally to the function of a «founding» memory[101], the cultural memory also takes on the role of a *counter memory* to the factual conditions in the past, present and future.[102] Therefore it is not astonishing that under this point she seems often to excessively glorify or to build a legend around the counter memory. History in itself should not be remembered but rather the specific meaning of the same.[103] Even the actor on his part is in danger of repressing or misunderstanding the real meaning of his actions.[104]

For Arendt all human actions are contingent; because humans possess the ability to act and to disrupt history, it is their responsibility to change unfree conditions. Although Arendt had devised for the positive option in her concept for a founded memory an absolutely normative benchmark, something like a collective historical symbol, in another passage she insists that she wants to take away people's «signposts».[105] On the other hand Arendt mentions certain positive and negative events in the past, the remembrance of which offers benchmarks for the interpretation of history and presence and which are supposed to invite further reasoning. With that she created a critical potential and normative impulses, which contradict her postulates of thoughts without restriction.[106] She wanted to orientate the public towards a contemporary political practice of freedom.

Can one think ahead of Arendt and if yes, in what sense? Is that which is derived from her expert knowledge only so loosely interwoven with her personal experience and thus connected to a context[107] that it is accessible for the affirmative, the sympathiser, however it withdraws from the empirical as a theoretical generalisation?[108] There is certainly a series of points of thought, which it is worthwhile to follow up, and which – even if in another way as Arendt herself might have found correct – were picked up. There is, on the one hand, her consequent approach, which starting from the empirical social research is essential today for the description and interpretation of human behaviour. This approach corresponds to the clear renunciation of casually constructed transcendental instance devised for the anchoring of the basic phases. Rather with her argumentation she is the co-founder of a «public philosophy» with civil religious traits[109], although she did not rely on a civil religion.[110] Her thoughts on the formation of a cultural memory have been proven to be heuristically fruitful on a cultural anthropological level in the research of Geertz[111] and Assmann. What she said about amnesia has been accepted in particular way by the

memory researchers.[112] From the same field of research her idealistic concept of freedom has certainly experienced many set-backs.[113] However, she constantly rejects the postulate of free will, as propounded by Rousseau.[114] To declare one such variable quantity as a fundament of freedom appeared too bold to her.[115]

For Hannah Arendt in the history of humanity there have been two great moments of freedom, which she stylised in an idealising way: the Greek polity and the American Revolution. In the American student revolt of the nineteen sixties[116] she initially saw a central moment of free action twinkle again and pinned her hopes on Daniel Cohn-Bendit[117] and others, in which she thought to be able to perhaps discover little Thomas Jeffersons or John Adamses. If she had experienced the revolutions of 1989/90, we may speculate that she would have understood the revolutionary created «public sphere» and the practiced political actions on the Round Table as a «spontaneously formed organ of the people»[118] and would have celebrated the so-called peaceful revolution altogether as the rebirth of freedom.[119] Herein there is possibly, alongside the concept of totalitarianism, a motive to be found why the founders of this Institute in Dresden chose the name of Hannah Arendt.[120] However, in the meantime in these circles of civil liberties disillusion has also arrived. Hannah Arendt's utopia of a «free republic» once again appears to have vanished into the distant future.

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47 Cf.: Arendt (1951), op. cit., p. 145 f.

48 Reif (1976), op. cit., S. 74.

49 However, the French Revolution played a central role for the communicative memory because important thinkers constantly reassess this great historical happening and strive to conceptually understand it: «I am inclined to think that it was precisely the great amount of theoretical concern and conceptual thought lavished upon the French Revolution by Europe's thinkers and philosophers which contributed decisively to its world-wide success, despite its disastrous end». Cf.: Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 219 f.

50 Cf.: Benhabib (1998), op. cit., p. 247 ff. Already Miller in *The Pathos of Novelty* (p. 196) countered that there was a serious problem in relation to Hannah Arendt's understanding of «social» and «political».

51 In contrast cf.: Rawls, J. (1971/1979) *Eine Theorie der Gerechtigkeit*. Frankfurt/M., esp. 336. See: Besier, G., Lindemann, G. (2006) *Im Namen der Freiheit. Die amerikanische Mission*. Göttingen. S. 272 ff.

52 Benhabib (1998), op. cit., p. 247 ff. Also see: Bernstein, R.J. Rethinking the social and the political. In: Williams (2006), op. cit., vol. III, p. 237–256.

53 Popper also believed that the French Revolution failed, as did the Russian Revolution because the struggle for freedom degenerated into terrorism. Cf.: Popper, K. (1996) Zum Thema Freiheit. In: Popper K. *Alles Leben ist Problemlösen. Über Erkenntnis, Geschichte und Politik*. Münich. S. 172. In contrast the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was victorious and failed. Ibid.

54 Cf.: Arendt, H. (1958/2000) Die Ungarische Revolution und der totalitäre Imperialismus. In: Arendt, H. *In der Gegenwart. Übungen im politischen Denken II*. Münich. S. 73–126. The work essentially serves to remind of the «freedom's day of death» (S. 73) and with it to conserve the «historical events» of spontaneous actions for the following generations.

55 She understood the worldwide «rebellion of students» in the mid-sixties as a shadow of the American Revolution. According to Arendt the American students learned that «one can change things. Without this trust in the changeability of things the opposition in America can not be understood». [Self translation.] See: Reif (1976), op. cit., S. 75.

56 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 94.

57 Cf.: Arendt, H. (1986) *Zur Zeit, Politische Essays*. Berlin. S. 163. [Self translation.]

58 Cf.: Benhabib, *Reluctant Modernism*, p. 160.

59 See: Hobsbawn, E.J. (2006) Hannah Arendt on revolution. In: G. Williams (ed.) *Hannah Arendt. Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*. Vol. 2. Abingdon–New York. P. 173–179.

60 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 35.

61 Arendt, H. (1970/[12]1996) *Macht und Gewalt. Mit einem Interview von Adelbert Reif*. Münich. S. 34.

62 Arendt, *Was ist Politik?* S. 33.

63 Cf.: Arendt, H. (2002) *Denktagebuch 1950–1973*. Munich. Vol. 1, 175 ff. Vol. 2, 767 f.

64 Cf.: Berlin, I. (1999) *Die Wurzeln der Romantik*. Berlin. S. 171 ff.

65 Cf.: Popper, K. *Die offene Gesellschaft und ihre Feinde*. Vol. II, S. 262 ff.

66 Arendt, *Was ist Politik?* S. 33.

67 Cf.: Arendt, H. (1949) Es gibt nur ein Menschenrecht, *Die Wandlung*. S. 754–770. Here she claimed that the right to freedom is the actual essence of human rights (ibid, S. 759).

68 Cf.: Schönherr-Mann (2006), op. cit., S. 111.

69 *The Declaration of Independence* and *The Constitution of the United States*. Intr. by P. Maier. New York, 1998. P. 53.

70 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 130.

71 Arendt, *Über die Revolution*, S. 168. [English version: «…one of the rare moments in history when the power of action is great enough to erect its own monument»; see: Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 130.]
72 Cf.: Arendt, *Gedanken zu Lessing*, S. 23.
73 Cf.: Arendt, *On Revolution*, S. 33.
74 Ibid, p. 33.
75 Ibid, p. 125.
76 Cf.: Greven (1993), op. cit., S. 86.
77 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 126.
78 Ibid, p. 170.
79 Ibid, p. 39.
80 On criticism of Arendt's concept of power cf.: Brunkhorst, H. (1994) Brot und Spiele? Hannah Arendts zweideutiger Begriff der Öffentlichkeit. In: U. Kubes-Hofmann (ed.) *Sagen, was ist. Zur Aktualität Hannah Arendts*. Vienna. S. 157. Also see: Habermas, J. (1976/1978) Hannah Arendts Begriff der Macht. In: Habermas J. *Politik, Kunst, Religion. Essays über zeitgenössische Philosophen*. Stuttgart; esp. 123.
81 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 175.
82 Ibid, p. 199.
83 James Miller had already ascertained in 1977 that in Arendt there is a great contrast between the pathos of the *Neugebürtlichkeit* of action on the one hand and the desire for the permanence of a durable constitution of freedom on the other hand, James Miller had already ascertained in 1977; see: Miller, *The Pathos of Novelty*, p. 182.
84 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 231.
85 At the beginning of the seventies she even feared the annulment of the constitution and with it the end of American freedom. The Student Movement wanted to make the constitution function once again. Cf.: Reif, *Gespräche mit Hannah Arendt*, p. 77 ff; quote: 79.
86 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 217.
87 Ibid, p. 216 f.
88 Cf.: Besier, Lindemann, *Im Namen der Freiheit*, S. 23, 58.
89 Cf.: Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 205.
90 Ibid, p. 204 f.
91 Ibid, p. 205.
92 Arendt, *Das Wollen*, S. 197.
93 Ibid, S. 193.
94 Cf.: Arendt, *Was ist Existenzphilosophie*, esp. 31; 34.
95 The final chapter of the English edition of *Über die Revolution* reads: «The Revolutionary Tradition and Its Lost Treasure»; in the German edition the title prosaically reads: «Tradition und Geist der Revolution» (Tradition and the Spirit of the Revolution). Also see: Arendt, *Introduction to Benjamin, Illuminations*, p. 50 f.
96 Miller, *The Pathos of Novelty*, p. 186.
97 Cf.: Thaa, W., Probst, L. (ed.) (2003) *Die Entdeckung der Freiheit. Amerika im Denken Hannah Arendts*. Berlin–Vienna.
98 That is also true for works of culture and art.: Arendt, H. (1958/[2]2000) Kultur und Politik. In: *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Übungen im politischen Denken I*. Münich. S. 302.
99 Arendt, *Vita Activa*, S. 157. Also see: Assmann, A., Harth, D. (ed.) (1991) *Mnemosyne. Formen und Funktionen der kulturellen Erinnerung*. Frankfurt/M.
100 Cf.: Assmann, J. (1999) *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. Münich.
101 Cf.: ibid, S. 78 ff.
102 Cf.: the parallels with Walter Benjamin, as Arendt experienced them: Arendt, *Walter Benjamin*, S. 20; cf. also: Arendt, H. ([2]2000) Die Lücke zwischen Ver-

gangenheit und Zukunft. In: Arendt, H. *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Übungen im politischen Denken I*. Münich. S. 14. On Hannah Arendt's relationship to Walter Benjamin see: Schöttker, D., Wizisla, E. (2005) Hannah Arendt und Walter Benjamin. Stationen einer Vermittlung, *Text und Kritik*. Zeitschrift für Literatur, 166/167 (September). S. 42–66.

103 Cf.: Althaus, *Erfahrung denken*, S. 304.

104 Cf.: Miller, *The Pathos of Novelty*, p. 184. Also see: Benjamin, W. (1980) Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen: Ueber den Begriff der Geschichte. In: *Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 1–2, Frankfurt am Main; Benjamin, W. ([13]2003) *Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften*. Sel. S. Unseld. Frankfurt/M.

105 Arendt, *Diskussion in Toronto*, p. 109. [Self translation.]

106 Ibid.

107 Cf.: Miller, *The Pathos of Novelty*, p. 197.

108 Cf.: Hermand, J. (2005) «Finding myself in history». Hannah Arendts Amerika-Erfahrung, *Text und Kritik*. Zeitschrift für Literatur 166/167 (September). S. 21–27

109 Cf.: Kleger, H., Müller, A. (ed.) ([2]2004) *Religion des Bürgers. Zivilreligion in Amerika und Europa*. Münster.

110 Cf.: Miller, *The Pathos of Novelty*, p. 192.

111 Cf.: Geertz, C. ([4]1995) *Dichte Beschreibung. Beiträge zum Verstehen kultureller Systeme*. Frankfurt/M.; esp. 49.

112 Cf.: Markowitsch, H.J. ([2]2005) *Dem Gedächtnis auf der Spur*. Darmstadt; Ders./ Harald Welzer (2006) *Das autobiographische Gedächtnis*. Stuttgart.

113 Cf.: Geyer, C. (ed.) (2004) *Hirnforschung und Willensfreiheit. Zur Deutung der neuesten Experimente*. Frankfurt/M.

114 Cf.: Arendt, H. (1968) *Between Past and Future*. New York. P. 164.

115 Cf.: Miller, *The Pathos of Novelty*, p. 187.

116 Reif, *Gespräche mit Hannah Arendt*, S. 95. Cf.: Greven, *Hannah Arendt*, S. 87 f.

117 Cf.: Cohn-Bendit, D. (1995) *Sie war keine ‚engagierte' Philosophin. She was not an ‚engaged' philosopher*: http:/polylogos.org/philosophers/arendt/arendt-philo.html.

118 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 249. On this idea in general cf.: Reif, *Gespräche mit Hannah Arendt*, S. 85. Also see: Greven, *Hannah Arendt*, S. 88.

119 Cf.: Althaus, *Erfahrung denken*, S. 272, note 102. The former citizen's rights campaigner, Ehrhart Neubert, reclaimed Hannah Arendt's concept of freedom for the peaceful revolution and makes the old Federal Republic of Germany responsible for the loss of this new beginning. Cf.: Neubert, E. (2006) Revolution und Revisionismus in Sprache, Geschichte und Recht, *TD*, 3, S. 47–77; 50; 66.

120 See the address of Saxony's state minister, Hans Joachim Meyer, and the chairman of the board of trustees, Matthias Rößler, on 17. June 1993 on the occasion of the opening of the Hannah-Arendt-Institute, Dresden 1995, 17–19; 23–26. Cf. also: R. Deppe et al. (ed.) (1991) *Demokratischer Umbruch in Osteuropa*. Frankfurt/M.

PLURALITY AS A VALUE IN ARENDT'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY[1]

Kristian Klockars*

Abstract

Hannah Arendt is known for her claim that plurality constitutes a central value for political life. It forms the normative core of her whole standpoint. It is not that clear, however, how plurality is to be understood, and in what senses it is valuable. In my contribution I emphasize several levels as central to her standpoint.

1. Plurality as the *differences* between individuals, including an affirmation of the value of individual freedom.

2. Worldliness as the field of human multiplicity as in common. It situates us in a condition of *equality* (nobody is initially more worthy than anyone else) and *diversity* (of individuals)

3. The political as the *encounter of a multiplicity* of views.

4. A diagnostic distinction between institutional arrangements that *diminishes* plurality and a society that *enables plurality*.

Arendt's analysis brings together general reflections on the human condition and a diagnostic perspective of the present. She works out her normative conception from both of them.

When viewed from a contemporary perspective Arendt's conception can be assessed in two ways. We will have to ask to what extent her diagnosis is applicable in the contemporary world. It seems clear that we need additional conceptual tools to Arendt's to understand our own predicament. Second, we may ask how valid her normative standpoint is and how it may be developed. In my contribution I reflect on how her defence of plurality is to be distinguished from liberal pluralism, and how the idea of plurality as the encounter of different perspectives can be interpreted in humanist perspective as a defence of cosmopolitan human rights, a strengthening of the political domain and a decentering of power relations on a global level.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, political life, plurality, globalization, cosmopolitan human rights.

1. Introduction

Hannah Arendt is known for her defence of plurality as a central value of political life. The affirmation of plurality is an essential ingredient of the normative core of her political theory. It is not that clear, however, what she actually means by plurality, and in

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what sense or senses it is valuable. A third issue is what the relation is between the value of plurality and the place and status of political institutions. The question of plurality as a value thus needs to be approached on at least two levels. First, to make intelligible the very content of plurality as a value. Second, to connect it with Arendt's reflections on political institutions.

In recent debates several different answers to the question for what plurality is valuable have been suggested[2]. According to an expressive interpretation, plurality is valuable because we can only realise our freedom and narratively construct ourselves as human beings through encounters with others. Only through such encounters in a field of plurality we are able to live out our singularity. Plurality thus contributes to the wellbeing of the individual.

According to a communicative interpretation, plurality is valuable because it is only through the realisation of open dialogue and debate concerning our different perspectives on the world that there can be such a thing as an enlightened political will-formation. Plurality contributes to the democratic realisation of reason in society. According to yet a third interpretation, the realisation of plurality is a basic condition for the possibility of genuine freedom. Plurality is thus valuable as both instrumental for and a substantial ingredient in the ideal of freedom for all. In addition, plurality must also be seen as a threatened condition. It needs to be protected by a political institutional setting that is supportive of plurality.

Arendt never took any clear position to these different interpretations, and there indeed remain tensions in Arendt's texts about how to understand her position. According to my interpretation, her standpoint is not in line with any of these options in contrast with the others, but contains elements of all. The essential point is to integrate several things that are valuable and not to simply Arendt's actual position by conflating it with ideal-typical positions such as these. The main difficulty is how to understand how they can be integrated, not to choose between them, but to decide what aspects are to be integrated and what excluded.

Arendt's distinctions are never purely theoretical designed, but are linked to what I like to call a diagnostic aim to understand and assess contemporary society. Arendt works out her normative reflections towards the background of such a diagnosis. In other words, we do indeed find a normative standpoint in Arendt, but her arguments are built by simultaneous reference to the human condition *and* to the problematic issues of her times. In *The Human Condition* she thus defines her project in such diagnostic terms:

> «What I propose in the following is a reconsideration of the human condition from the vantage point of our newest experiences and our most recent fears... What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing. 'What we are doing' is indeed the central theme of the book» (HC, 1958: 5).

My reading of Arendt here is intended to keep a balance between textual interpretation and an understanding of Arendt's diagnosis of the times.

Arendt always leaves open the possibility that new events, changes in the historical constellation and new developments may affect the normative standpoint. Her discourse is not closed, but remains open to the practical reality of history. I thus also very much agree with Margaret Canovan's assessment that an implication of Arendt's reflection is «…that theory is no substitute for practice. This is something that comes hard to many political theorists, for the occupational delusion of thinkers is the belief that constructing a neat theoretical scheme is equivalent to getting something done» (Canovan, 1983: 298).

2. Plurality

Arendt uses plurality both in a neutral and phenomenological descriptive sense as a central dimension of the human condition and as a *value* the political community ought to affirm and safeguard. This variable use creates some confusion as to how the notion is to be understood in different contexts. I shall here mainly focus on the value-aspect of the notion.

As is the case with many other notions, Arendt uses plurality in a specific but uncommon sense. By plurality she does not simply mean the mere co-existence of a multiplicity of human beings. Quite the contrary, multiplicity shall in some cases even be diametrically opposed to plurality, and to be characterised as world alienation or an experience of worldlessness rather than plurality (HC, 1958: 52–58).

As a political value, again, plurality is not to be conflated with liberal pluralism or the individual right to choose a world-view. Plurality is inherently connected with human interaction and political participation. It has been characterised alternatively as republican, radical democratic or agonistic (Canovan, 1992: 204–208; Honig, 1993; Villa, 1996: 52–61). I shall here pinpoint five aspects as central to Arendt's notion of plurality: equality, diversity, active participation, the shared world as a central mediating factor and the interactive or communicative dimension.

Arendt's characterization in *The Human Condition* is initially straightforward and clear:

> «Human plurality, the basic condition of both action and speech, has the twofold character of equality and distinction» (HC, 1958: 175).

Furthermore, «plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same … in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live» (HC, 1958: 8). In essence, then, plurality comprises two features that must be considered together: the equality of human beings as being basically the same in combination with the essential distinctness of each and the diversity between persons. It includes both a sense of our overall belongingness to the same species and the experience of a limitless variation of differences between human beings – present differences, but also past and future ones (HC, 1958: 175–192.)

Arendt treatment of equality is two-dimensional: as an ontological question concerned with of the human condition and as a political ques-

tion concerned with the realisation of equality as a value. Although the possibilities to develop a full-blown ontology are very limited, it is still important to emphasize the presence of this dimension. Otherwise it will be nearly impossible to explain the apparent stark contrast between her claims in *Origins of Totalitarianism* that «we are not born equal; we become equal as members of a group...» (OT, 1962: 301) and the claims about equality as a given part of our human condition (see also *Introduction to Politics* in *PP*, 2005: 93–94).

This combination of equality with diversity closes off the sense of analysing the human condition in terms of a human nature. There is indeed an ontological moment in Arendt's conception, but it is limited to a minimum set of conditions: «Life itself, natality and mortality, worldliness, plurality and the earth» (HC, 1958: 11, see also 9–10, 181). These conditions, furthermore, never condition us absolutely, but imply openness towards different possible ways of realising them in actual life (HC, 1958: 11). In this sense Arendt inherits the main traits of existential phenomenological reasoning: ontological conditions are schemes that may be lived out in different ways on the concrete level of the lived.[3] For example a political regime may limit our possibilities to realize these conditions. Thus, the condition of equality does not guarantee the realization of equality: realization is always dependent on what people actually do and what kind of society one lives in.

This co-presence of equality and diversity, however, forms only two aspects and they need to be connected with other dimensions in order to reveal the full concept. The third aspect is the importance of the shared world or worldliness as a kind of mediating factor between equality and diversity (see for example HC, 1958: 52–58, 176, 196–202, 220). This notion of shared world forms an essential basis of plurality as a political concept. Arendt defines the political in terms of a plurality that is concerned with the issues of a common world they share. It is thus primarily a sharing, and not for example pre-defined group-identities that connect people together into a political community.

Arendt also uses the notion of world in several senses. According to one usage, it is the sharing of something in common that defines a world. Two opposites of this experiential notion are worldlessness and the earth (HC, 1958: 7–9, 22–23, 52–58, see also Canovan, 1992: 105–110). The earth or the physical traits of nature do not by themselves define a world for us in this sense, but a human element of sharing is needed. A world is shared in this strict sense only insofar as a certain multiplicity really has things in common and communicates with each other about them. If we lack this, we may instead experience a withdrawal of the sense of sharing or worldlessness.

The fourth and fifth aspects of plurality are action as a mode of doing and action as a mode of communicative interaction (HC, 1958: 176–184). Arendt's notion of plurality not only refers to static aspects of the human condition, but to the active and interactive level where we actively relate to other human beings and communicate with each other. It is inherently intersubjective and dynamic, emphasising real encounters between equal

but diverse human beings. Only on this level of interactive encounters does it constitute a fully political notion.

Arendt's notion of plurality thus initially frees the political from any connection with pre-figured group-identities and institutional frameworks by anchoring it in human encounters concerning the shared world, only to tie it on the next level to the existence of *real* human encounters, thereby conceptually connecting it with the existence of some, presumably suitably small, community.

The value of plurality is thus constructed through a synthetic interconnection of several issues. Thereby it becomes clear that it should neither be conflated with multiplicity, nor as the same as liberal pluralism. It is a very "earthly" notion, emphasizing the importance to understand our earthly connection and that these internally connect us with other persons with whom the world is shared.

3. Community and Institutional Settings

The notion of the shared world as what is common in plurality and as what makes up the polis may be understood in various ways. According to my interpretation, it is important not to downplay the world dimension and to overemphasize the community aspects of the notion of the shared world. I think Arendt by the shared world refers to the co-presence of world and a multiplicity in encounter, not to a notion of community understood as a unified *Us* or an «our community». The world, the fact that it is shared in plurality, a plurality that is open exactly because it refers us to the world and not to a given, unified community, is an essential aspects of the notion of a shared world.

Arendt conceptualizes the political in terms of the unresolved issues common to a plurality. This is what primarily defines who belongs to a political community. This also implies that the size of a political community may vary depending on the issues involved, and it may change over time.

In addition to this floating aspect of the political community Arendt nevertheless emphasizes the essential need for a real community in order for a public sphere to be created. The public

> «space of appearance comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action… Only where men live so close together that the potentialities of action are always present can power remain with them, and the foundation of cities … is therefore indeed the most important material pre-requisite for power» (HC, 1958: 199, 201).

Arendt emphasizes the importance of community in several places. Without a community it seems that plurality will be reduced to pure multiplicity, that is to say a manifold without the lived aspect of encounter and sharing of a world. But the community in question becomes a community through the mediation of the world, and does not form an experiential or self-conscious Us-perspective. Community should thus here primarily be understood as co-existence.

This co-existence may be steered and circumscribed by the existence of institutional factors, or a fabricated level of existence achieved by means of what Arendt names work: a constitution defining membership, citizenship, rights, divisions of power, a political culture etc. These fabricated dimensions of the world forms one important aspect of the world, but they can never exhaust the full dimension of worldliness that defines the political. Insofar as we share things of the world across the borders on nation-states, insofar as new event demand us to understand the world and how we share it in new ways, we may be continuously forced to reconsider the borders and content of communities.

Arendt's reasoning is strongly historical. She continuously emphasizes the specificities of the real world, the dependence of many things on work and action for their continuous existence and the importance of time. Conditions become turned into reality only through what may be called specific processes of realisation, or on what men make out of their conditions, on work and fabrication, the construction of institutional settings etc. (HC, 1958: 9–11).

In *The Human Condition* Arendt emphasises this earthly dimension of her ontology and the world. Worldlineness should be understood in two senses: the fabrication of man-made things, or work, and the world as that very whole, shared by all that forms the only unifying aspect at the foundation of plurality. She writes:

> «Men are conditioned beings because everything they come in contact with turns immediately into a condition of existence ... [and] men constantly create their own, self-made conditions, which ... possess the same conditioning power as natural things» (p. 9).

Although Arendt does not in this context mention political institutions as a form of fabricated conditions, her discussion in other works strongly suggests that they ought to be included within these. Established political institutions are, one may say, the results of both action and fabrication, and they form a concrete part of our condition. In the second place, only through the fabrication of political institutions is it possible that our actions become part of the intersubjective world as at least relatively permanent achievements. History is to a large extent made through the anchoring of innovative actions and political events in new institutional arrangements.

Arendt's reflections on institutions are in part separated into different works, and this is one of the reasons why their interconnection is sometimes difficult to comprehend. *The Human Condition* deals rather sparsely with public institutions, whereas the book published immediately afterwards, *On Revolution* threats this issue extensively, but rarely reconnects them with her ontology.

Arendt agonistically criticizes the identification of politics with governmental rule and in contrast rehabilitates a participatory conception of politics as anchored in action and plurality. This may leave the impression that she devalues the importance of political institutions, but such a judg-

ment would be misguided. This becomes clear especially if we read *On Revolution* in tandem with *The Human Condition*.

Viewed from Arendt's diagnostic perspective political institutions may function either to diminish or to strengthen plurality. This thesis is well expressed by Margaret Canovan: «…plurality is inescapable, but … worldly institutions … can provide a way of holding people together while leaving them space in which to differ» (1983: 300). It is thus indeed possible that institutional frameworks create oppressive forms of rule, and this negative possibility is a major motivating factor for Arendt's engagement in these issues in the first place. The very bulk of her research, one may say, lies with the ambition to discern forms of government that dominate and repress us.

But the institutional setting of a society also forms one aspect of the fabricated world that is shared by a plurality (HC, 1958: 220–230). Institutions are thus a part of our condition. Furthermore, only through the fabrication of constitutions, laws, political institutions, etc. may action be turned into more permanent historical achievements, achievements we can learn from and build upon (HC, 1958: 136–139, 204). Actions need to be anchored in the intersubjective world in order for them to have any longstanding effects and to become real results.

This concern with the institutional dimension of politics is deepened in Arendt's comparison of the pros and cons of the American and French Revolutions in *On Revolution* (OR, 1963: 115–214). Throughout the book Arendt places the American Revolution in a more positive light than the French one, although she concludes with a critique of how the American model in actual fact turned out. The American Revolution embodied, in its primordial, active moment, at least three things Arendt finds important. It was, first, a participatory movement inducing change. Second, it was from the beginning informed by a suspicion that all government may turn oppressive. Third, it took seriously the challenge to establish institutional safeguards that would both enable people to participate and create checks against potential abuses of power.

All political movements that induce change need to think through the transition from the level of action, constitutive of all such movements, to the level of institutions. Only the fabrication of institutional arrangements can make the changes introduced into a real and relatively permanent part of the shared world. Arendt argues that these two levels demand different reflective logics. It is not the same to reason about what we want to do and to reason about what kind of institutions could best ensure that what we want could be safeguarded as a permanent part of reality (OR, 1963: 141–154.)

Arendt is particularly critical of the French Revolution's failure to consider this difference. The political unification necessary to bring about change, for example a popular movement, risks turn into a totalitarian form of rule if one fails to rethink the values inspiring the movement in terms of the demands of an institutional system (OR, 1963: 141–154). Rousseau's conception of the general will as the unified sovereign functions well as long as the goal is transformation. But the idea of a centralized

and unified authority remained intact in the French conception of popular sovereignty, and thus made possible defending terror by reference to the interests of the people (OR, 1963: 181–185, 215–248). This conflated the logic of a popular movement with the logic of institutional frameworks.

Arendt here places especially one central institutional principle in the foreground: Montesquieu's idea of a division of powers (OR, 1963: 150–154). She calls this a brilliant insight. Its core content is that «only 'power arrests power'» (OR, 1963: 151), only another power can keep a power under control without, Arendt adds, destroying it. First, the institutions of society should be organized in such a way that no single instance can gain full control and rule over the polity. This, of course, is a very commonplace argument. But how does it fit together with Arendt's conception of active and participatory citizenship, an activity that seems so different from an institutional safeguard against domination?

And how does the principle of division of powers fit together with Arendt's conception of power? Arendt famously defines power as acting in concert, and distinguishes power from strength, violence, rule and sovereignty (*On Violence* in CR, 1972: 134–155). She defends power as a necessary and important aspect of politics, and does not consider it a bad thing. But if power in this sense is the positive outcome of a plurality of freedoms that act together, why should it have to be divided and arrested?

Arendt's point appears more intelligible when viewed from a diagnostic perspective. The very bulk of her research lies with an ambition to discern forms of government that comes to dominate and represses. There are especially two clear examples of this in Arendt's work: totalitarianism and modern mass-society. Both limit the possibility of active citizenship and tend toward a unification of the polity, although in different ways. These examples show that plurality is a vulnerable dimension of the human condition that needs or at least gains from the establishment of an institutional setting that could promote plurality. The division of powers is exactly such a setting because, one may argue, it is itself based on the very idea of plurality.

Second, then, the division of power must not destroy power, but only keep it under control. Arendt's thesis becomes intelligible only if the emphasis is on arrest, and not on abolishing power. There should indeed be institutional safeguards against power turned into dominating rule, but it ought simultaneously to enhance citizen empowerment.

On Revolution ends with Arendt's defence of the council-level of the political activity (OR, 1963: 275–281), later repeated in *Thoughts on Action and Revolutions* (in CR). Here we seem to have in concrete form Arendt's political ideal: a group of people that freely come together in a smaller scale council, and realize plurality through open and free deliberation on common issues. On the other hand, in the light of her reflections on the logic of institutions, it seems that the existence of this possibility is also dependent on institutional framework that safeguards it.

Conclusion

It is thus important for us to strive to understand the basic conditions of human life, included our earthly condition as a world shared by a multiplicity. But human action and the establishment of political institutions may either contribute to the actualisation of plurality as a communicative relation between freedoms, or they may develop into obstacles or forces contrary to this. No theoretical standpoint per se can decide on these issues, what is needed is the combination of theoretical reflection and an experiential-diagnostic attentiveness to what is going on in the world. The message of Arendt's normative standpoint, however, is clear: political society and human action ought to contribute positively to the realisation of plurality. Not, however, a plurality that is given free room for some to dominate over others, but exactly a plurality that gives room to everyone's freedom and to diversity.

As for her diagnostic viewpoint I think many today will agree that what Arendt calls plurality is still very much under siege, although the threats today must probably be understood differently than through the lenses of totalitarian rule and social administration. As for her normative standpoint, the discussion on these issues continues today for example in the debates on deliberative and agonistic conception of democracy, and these debates have surpassed at least some of Arendt's claims, not by proving them wrong, but by taking them seriously and a step further. What is still lacking is a reconsideration of the value of plurality as such, and this is one of the reasons why I find a study of this issue important.

In her essay *Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World?* from the mid 60s Arendt re-poses all of these questions again on the level of a global society. As so many others today, she is highly critical of any idea of an all-encompassing world state, which, she writes, would surely create a monstrosity. Instead she defends the establishment of institutional arrangements and the creation of a communicative culture that would secure basic equality in combination with diversity, in other words plurality. Such a diversity should be realised both on the level of differences between individuals and between different historical communities, preserving their richness but fighting their dogmatisms. Her hope lies with what she calls a philosophy of mankind, in contrast to a universalistic philosophical anthropology or philosophy of Man, and it should be based on a concept of communication, one that she finds in Jaspers.

> «This philosophy of mankind will not abolish … the great philosophical systems of the past in India, China and the Occident, but will strip them of their dogmatic metaphysical claims, dissolve them, as it were, into trains of thought which meet and cross each other, communicate with each other and eventually retain only what is universally communicative. A philosophy of mankind is distinguished from a philosophy of Man by its insistence that not Man, talking to himself in the dialogue of solitude, but men talking and communicating with each other, inhabit the earth» (p. 90).

Abbreviations

OT = The Origins of Totalitarianism
HC = The Human Condition
BPF = Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought
OR = On Revolution
MDT = Men in Dark Times
CR = Crises of the Republic
EU = Essays in Understanding
PP = The Promise of Politics

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1 This paper originates in a talk given at the symposium *The Legacy of Hannah Arendt in The Early 21st Century* in 2007organized by Department of Philosophy, European Humanities University and Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Philosophy, Vilnius University. I have kept the straightforward style from the oral presentation. I have discussed these issues further but the perspective of cosmopolitanism in: Cosmopolitan plurality in Arendt's political philosophy // *Ethical Perspectives.* 2008. Vol. 15, № 2.

2 See for example: Passerin d'Entreves M. *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt* (p. 84–85) and Dana Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror* (p. 128–154).

3 I would here compare Arendt's conception with the French existential phenomenologists de Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, rather than Heidegger. Arendt more strongly than Heidegger emphasizes the active aspect of doing something out of what we have been made into, to paraphrase Sartre. This does not deny the fact that Arendt was influenced by Heidegger's philosophy.

HANNAH ARENDT'S CONCEPTION OF SOVEREIGNTY

Annelies Degryse*

Abstract

Until recently, the concept of sovereignty has served us well. Although in reality there has never existed an absolute sovereign or completely homogenous nation-state, both provided an adequate theoretical means to conceptualize the actual political ordering of modern societies. These linked power to a nation defined by a territory, forming the nation-state. Through popular sovereignty, it was then again linked with democracy.

However, this model has a downside as well. Reflecting upon her own experience as a refugee, Hannah Arendt pointed out one of its vicious flaws through her criticism of human rights. When most desperately needed, human rights remained empty boxes, failing to provide protection for refugees, as they were inseparable from the condition of citizenship. And her criticism does not only touch human rights, but also popular sovereignty. Those who were not considered part of the people did not only lose their right to speak, but all their rights, as their rights were determined through the will of the people.

Recently, however, the concept of sovereignty has come under tremendous pressure. It is contested from below and above to such an extent that it even loses its usefulness as a model. Some contemporary theorists such as Habermas and Held defend new models of sovereignty, in which sovereign power is vertically 'dispersed' over various intertwined, political levels. This model attempts to address the problems of multiculturalism and globalization.

However, does this new model pass the test? Can it stand up to Arendt's criticism of state sovereignty? What is the worth of human rights in this model? One hundred years after her birth, it is an appropriate time to reflect on Arendt's criticism on human rights and sovereignty and the alternatives she had in mind.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, political philosophy, sovereignty, human rights, globalisation.

In contemporary political theory and philosophy, it is generally accepted that the nation-state and its sovereignty have been put under pressure by the increasingly multicultural character of today's society and by globalization processes. Many political phi-

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losophers agree with Jürgen Habermas and David Held that the supposed homogeneity of the sovereign nation has become very problematic and that the increase of globalization processes and the rise of supra- and transnational organizations have diminished the impact of the nation-state on its politico-juridical and social-economical processes. In the same line, the concept of sovereignty seems to lose its meaning in the 'postnational constellation', where boundaries have become permeable. Therefore, Habermas and others propose alternative conceptions of the world order, discussing the world state, or a world federation and introducing new concepts into the academic debate, such as 'global governance', or 'governance without governments', 'cosmopolitan citizenship' and 'cosmopolitan democracy'. At the same time, other scholars, who argue that our nationality is too much part of our identity, object to these claims and proposals, and maintain that attempts at cosmopolitanism will fail. They often defend the nation-state as the best way to frame our political goals.[1]

This claim, however, of the erosion of the nation-state and its supporting concept of sovereignty is not new. In 1945, Hannah Arendt already argued that «national sovereignty is no longer a workable concept», stating that «[i]t is true, and almost self-evident, that the whole Continent is likely to collapse because of the principle of national sovereignty[.]»[2] Yet, history seemed to provide evidence of the contrary. The European nation-states did not collapse and they proved to be much more adaptable than Arendt would grant. And even new nation-states emerged not only from the process of decolonization, but also and more recently from the collapse of the Soviet Empire.

Considering the recent academic debates on the role and the future of the nation-state and the concept of sovereignty, it is interesting to review Arendt's early critique. Was Arendt just ahead of her time, claiming that the concept of sovereignty was no longer workable? Or was she wrong, and do the recent debates have nothing to do with her analyses of the nation-state? Or – another possibility – are the recent debates concerning the nation-state and its alternatives also ill-conceived? In this paper, I shall re-examine Arendt's critique of sovereignty and the nation-state and try to evaluate it in the light of the contemporary debates.

The Decline of the Nation-State

«[S]overeignty is no longer a workable concept».[3] Arendt presented this claim in many of her political writings throughout the years. It was one of her conclusions from her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and she never changed her opinion on it. Well known in the book is her chapter on 'The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man', where she describes the nation-state as a contradiction in terms and criticizes human rights. What is less well recognized is that in the first parts of the book, Arendt attributes a positive role to the nation-state. In her search for proto-totalitarian elements, Arendt describes the nation-state as a barrier against imperialism and totalitarianism. Unfortunately, they gave way to imperialism in the end. In what follows, I will focus on

both roles the nation-state plays in *The Origins on Totalitarianism* and Arendt's alternative conception of sovereignty.

The Nation-State as a Fortress

In the first parts of *The Origins on Totalitarianism*, Arendt describes the nation-state as a fortress against totalitarianism. In the introduction of 'Imperialism', the second part of the book, she writes:

> «Nothing was so characteristic of power politics in the imperialist era than this shift from localized, limited and therefore predictable goals of national interest to the limitless pursuit of power after power that could roam and lay waste the whole globe with no certain nationally and territorially prescribed purpose and hence with no predictable direction».[4]

From this line of thought, we can reconstruct her positive attitude towards the nation-state. The nation-state provided clear boundaries, defining the territory as well as its residents. And by providing these boundaries, the nation-state stabilized politics and action. Its importance can only be understood in the light of her understanding of totalitarianism as endless motion. For Arendt, totalitarianism was «the culmination of forces in modern times that uproot people by destroying the worldly structures that hold them together, turning them into masses of motion»[5]. The stability provided by the nation-state stood in strong opposition to the unending motion of totalitarianism and made action and speech possible and meaningful. For Arendt, politics is only possible within a limited space, and though she is vague on it, these limited spaces need to be protected by the positively established fences of laws and institutions. Most importantly, in her positive analysis of the nation-state, these boundaries set limits on politics and action, making politics predictable to some extent, for its goal is the national interest. Again, the characteristic feature of action, unpredictability, needs limits and these are established by the political and territorial boundaries, set by the nation-state and its institutions. Arendt will further elaborate these initial ideas in *The Human Condition*, where she presents the Greek polis as a model of the world as 'human artifice', with territorial and political boundaries protected by the city walls and its laws.[6]

However, during the rise of the nation-state, capitalism arose as well, slowly undermining the nation-state and, according to Arendt, finally giving way to imperialism. Hauke Brunkhorst calls this rightly Arendt's '*Imperialismustheorie*', and it differs significantly from her second account of the decline of the nation-state.[7] Here, the positively estimated nation-state is overwhelmed by economic forces. This line of thought leads Arendt to the strongly contested strict distinction in her work between the political and the social and economic. Again, she will further elaborate these ideas in *The Human Condition,* where she presents her '*Verfallsgeschichte*' of modern politics overpowered by the social. In this paper, I focus on her account of imperialism, as sketched in *The Origins of Totalitarianism.*

As was just mentioned, according to Arendt, capitalism arose along with the rise of the nation-state, creating a new class: the bourgeoisie. At first, this class was not at all interested in politics and government, but was well contented «with every type of state that could be trusted with protection of property rights».[8] As long as their property was protected, they left politics for what it was. But «when the nation-state proved unfit to be the framework for the further growth of capitalist economy … the latent fight between state and society become openly a struggle for power»[9]. The bourgeoisie turned to politics and imported not only the language of successful businessmen but also economic dynamism into the political realm:

> «The bourgeoisie turned to politics out of economic necessity; for it did not want to give up the capitalist system whose inherent law is constant economic growth, it had to impose this law upon its home governments and to proclaim expansion to be an ultimate political goal of foreign policy».[10]

Expansion became a permanent and supreme aim of politics, giving rise to imperialism. Therefore, Arendt understands imperialism as a political, rather than an economic phenomenon:

> «Imperialism must be considered the first stage in political rule of the bourgeoisie rather than the last stage of capitalism».[11]

Unfortunately, «[o]f all forms of government and organizations of people, the nation-state is least suited for unlimited growth[.]»[12]. According to Arendt, the nation-state is based on the consent of its people and its laws are the «outgrowth of a unique national substance», only valid within the boundaries of its territory.[13] Consequentially, «[w]herever the nation-state appeared as conqueror, it aroused national consciousness and desire for sovereignty among the conquered people, thereby defeating all genuine attempts at empire building»[14]. So, Arendt claims that a conflict between the imperialist goal of expansion and the limited interests of the nation-state arose, a conflict that neither the bourgeoisie, nor the nation-state won.[15] However, the damage was done. Economics found its way into politics, replacing political values and standards by economical ones, and paving the path for totalitarianism.

For Arendt, the philosopher who expressed these new economic values was Thomas Hobbes. His *Leviathan* was one of the most important intellectual sources of imperialism. Hobbes was «the only great thinker who ever attempted to derive public good from private interest and who, for the sake of the private good, conceived and outlined the Commonwealth whose basis and ultimate end is accumulation of power»[16].

By doing so, he sketched «an almost complete picture, not of Man but of the bourgeois man, an analysis which in three hundred years has neither been outdated nor excelled»[17]. In Arendt's reading, Hobbes depicts man as a creature without reason, without the capacity for truth and without free will, that is, a man without the capacity for responsibility. Man has only one passion: desire for power, as he is only driven by his individual inter-

ests that he needs to protect against others. In this struggle for power, all men are equal:

> «Their equality as potential murderers places all men in the same insecurity, from which arises the need for a state».[18]

So, the *raison d'être* of the state in Hobbes's philosophy is security, as all men are threatened by their fellow men. Therefore, the state acquires a monopoly on killing and violence, and in exchange provides security against being killed or losing one's goods. Its law is not established by men according to the human standards of right and wrong, but is the emanation of this state's monopoly on violence:

> «In regard to the law of the state – that is, the accumulated power of society as monopolized by the state – there is no question of right or wrong, but only absolute obedience[.]»[19].

Though Arendt does not mention the concept of sovereignty in her reading of Hobbes in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, she understands sovereignty in the same way, as becomes clear from her other writings on the topic. For Arendt, Hobbes's concept of sovereignty is the expression of the bourgeoisie's indifference towards politics, handing over their rights to enter the public realm to the sovereign in exchange for protection of their private property, and by doing so, giving over to domination and 'rule over others'. Sovereignty is then «the ideal of uncompromising self-sufficiency and mastership»[20]. It can only be achieved by giving up freedom, not the negative freedom of 'liberation from', but the Arendtian human freedom to take part in human affairs. Therefore, «[i]f men wish to be free, it is precisely sovereignty they must renounce»[21]. In *The Human Condition,* she takes her argumentation against sovereignty a step further, claiming that it is 'contradictory to the very condition of plurality':

> «No man can be sovereign because not one man, but men, inhabit the earth- and not, as the tradition since Plato holds, because of man's limited strength, which makes him depend upon the help of others».[22]

Sovereignty for Arendt is a fiction:

> «[S]overeignty is possible in imagination, paid for by the price of reality».[23]

The least one can say of Arendt's reading of Hobbes is that it is oversimplified and one-sided. She does not understand Hobbes's philosophy as an early blueprint of the nation-state, but as the blueprint of totalitarianism, as «the Leviathan actually amounts to a permanent government of tyranny[.]»[24]. To her, Hobbes' social contract is not the foundation of a freedom-guaranteeing state based on the rule of law, but the surrender of men in the hands of a tyrant in order to protect their goods. This interpretation of Hobbes brings Arendt also to her impotence to understand popular sovereignty, as we will see below.

The Nation-State as a Contradiction in Terms

Arendt's early '*Imperialismustheorie*' describes the nation-state as attacked by external forces. Its decline, caused by imperialism, is therefore not inevitable but due to historical contingencies. In her later chapter on 'The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man', her insight of the nation-state has changed. Its decline is now described as inevitable, as the nation-state is a contradiction in terms. At the heart of this intrinsic tension between the nation and the state stands her conception of popular sovereignty as national sovereignty.

> «The secret conflict between state and nation came to light at the very birth of the modern nation-state, when the French Revolution combined the declaration of the Rights of Man with the demand of national sovereignty».[25]

The positive aspects that she ascribed to the nation-state as such in her first analysis are in her later analysis only ascribed to the state and no longer to the nation. Before the French Revolution, according to Arendt, the state protected all inhabitants of its territory, no matter what their nationality was, as the state acted as the supreme and impartial legal institution. However, the people's rising national consciousness interfered with the state and its functions.[26] This consciousness was originally evoked by the state to prevent 'a permanent civil war' after the abolition of the king:

> «The only remaining bond between the citizens of a nation-state without a monarch to symbolize their essential community, seemed to be national, that is, common origin».[27]

This uniting sentiment of common origin would express itself in nationalism. However, this nationalism, combined with popular sovereignty, is a deadly fusion for Arendt, since she has an over-simplified conception of popular sovereignty as the highest power «bound by no universal law and acknowledging nothing superior to itself»[28]. At the same time that the people claimed human rights as inalienable, they claimed to be sovereign, rejecting every other authority.

> «Man appeared as the only sovereign in matters of law as the people was proclaimed the only sovereign in matters of government».[29]

So, the 'inalienable' rights of man would find their guarantee in the government by the people. And although the French Revolutionists intended it otherwise, «[t]he practical outcome», according to Arendt, «was that from then on human rights were protected and enforced only as national rights and that the very institution of a state, whose supreme task was to protect and guarantee man his rights as a man, as citizen and as national, lost its legal, rational appearance[.]»[30] Consequentially, Arendt refers to 'national sovereignty' instead of popular sovereignty.

From this point of view, Arendt develops her critique on human rights. Human rights were unenforceable, because they were linked with citizen-

ship, and citizenship at its turn, was linked with nationality. Therefore, Arendt claims that the declaration of human rights misses the point:

> «The calamity of the rightless is not that they are deprived of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, or of equality before the law and freedom of opinion – formulas which were designed to solve problems *within* given communities – but that they no longer belong to any community whatsoever».[31]

People who were no longer citizens of any state, appeared as 'rightless', since no state took care of them. As long as there existed a 'comity of European nations' and 'an unorganized solidarity and agreement', the consequences of national sovereignty remained hidden.[32] However, when a growing number of people became homeless or stateless, the full implications of national sovereignty became clear:

> «[T]he moment human beings lacked their own government and had to fall back upon their minimum rights, no authority was left to protect them and no institution was willing to guarantee them».[33]

In her conception of popular sovereignty, Arendt makes a radical distinction between the rule of the people and the rule of law. For her, the rule of the people reduces law into an instrument in the hands of the people. She cannot conceive of popular sovereignty as the constituting act of the people founding a state based on equality and the rule of law. Therefore, she is eager to find another ground for law, restricting the power of the people, to solve 'the problem of an absolute'[34].

In his excellent book on Arendt, Hauke Brunkhorst claims that her account of the nation-state as contradiction in terms is due to her silent substitution of the original French political-juridical concept of nation with an ethnic-cultural concept of the nation. According to Brunkhorst, Arendt neglects making a difference between formal and substantial homogeneity.[35] Arendt does not see the distinction between the late eighteenth-century conception of 'nation' as political-juridical concept and the nineteenth-century conception of 'nation' as ethnic concept. As a consequence, she confuses popular sovereignty with national self-determination. This critique, however, is not entirely convincing, since Arendt does make a difference between 'tribal nationalism' of Central and Eastern Europe and the nationalism of 'the fully developed Western nation-state'.[36]

In an attempt to present Arendt as in favor of the nation-state, Margaret Canovan describes the latter as 'worldly' nationalism. In Canovan's reading of Arendt's '*Imperialismustheorie*', it was exactly due to this 'worldly' nationalism that the nation-state was able to stand up against proto-totalitarian forces. Yet, in contradiction to what Canovan claims, Arendt rejects nationalism in general, as it is «essentially the expression of this perversion of the state into an instrument of the nation and the identification of the citizen with the member of the nation» [37]. This rejection of nationalism and her distinction between the nation and nationalism makes clear what is at stake for Arendt. What concerns Arendt is how vulner-

able all nation-states are to nationalism in general. As a refugee herself in France, she experienced how quickly even 'the glorious power of French nationhood', where every citizen was considered as a national, was substituted by an organic doctrine in terms of blood relationships and family ties.[38] For Arendt, a unity of nation and state, combined with popular sovereignty, could easily lead to nationalism, excluding all minorities and individuals that do not fit into the organic doctrine. Therefore, Arendt was eager «to find a political principle which would prevent nations from developing nationalism and would thereby lay the fundamentals of an international community, capable of presenting and protecting the civilization of the modern world»[39]. Arendt will retake the problem of popular sovereignty and she presents her solution in *On Revolution*.

Constitutional Republicanism as Alternative

In *On Revolution*, Arendt claims that the American revolutionaries devised a solution for 'the problem of an absolute'. They did not make the mistakes the French revolutionaries made. First, and in contradiction to the French revolutionaries, they were never tempted to derive law and power from the same origin:

> «The seat of power to them was the people, but the source of law was to become the Constitution, a written document, an endurable objective thing[.]»[40]

Here, Arendt explains why this is so important. It also clarifies why she makes such a radical distinction between politics and law:

> «[P]ower, contrary to what we are inclined to think, cannot be checked, at least not reliably, by laws, for the so-called power of the ruler which is checked in constitutional, limited, lawful government is in fact not power but violence, it is the multiplied strength of the one who has monopolized the power of the many. Laws, … are always in danger of being abolished by the power of the many, and in a conflict between law and power it is seldom the law which will emerge as victor».[41]

In the continuation of the paragraph, Arendt elaborates on how power can be checked. It was the second political innovation of the American founding fathers. As an answer to their question on how to establish power, they established a federal system:

> «Yet even if we assume that law is capable of checking power – and on this assumption all truly democratic forms of government must rest if they are not to degenerate into the worst and most arbitrary tyranny – the limitation which laws set upon power can only result in a decrease of its potency. Power can be stopped *and* still be kept intact only by power, so that the principle of the separation of power not only provides a guarantee against the monopolization of power by one part of the government, but actually provides a kind of mechanism, built into the very heart of government, through which new power is constantly generated, without, however, being

> able to overgrow and expand to the detriment of other centres or sources of power».[42]

Linked with these two political innovations was a third:

> «[T]he great and, in the long run, perhaps the greatest American innovation in politics as such was the consistent abolition of sovereignty within the body politic of the republic, the insight that in the realm of human affairs sovereignty and tyranny are the same».[43]

Again, Arendt fails to construe sovereignty. She understands it as the arbitrary exercise of power that can only be controlled by federalism, not as a form of agency represented as a unity.

Hannah Arendt Reconsidered

The preceding observations reveal why Arendt talks about 'the bankruptcy of the nation-state and its concept sovereignty'[44]. Though her warning for nationalism and its consequences is still valuable and worth considering, her conception of sovereignty fails. Through her reading of Hobbes, Arendt can only think of sovereignty as arbitrary power, leading to tyranny and excluding freedom and plurality. However, this does not mean that Arendt's thoughts on politics are useless to understand and to face the challenges of the 21st century. Recently, her preference for republicanism has gained more and more approval for organizing our societies.[45] And also the renewed interest in her writings on Zionism is due to her striking, almost prophetic insights on the situation in Israel. These writings provide us with clues about how Arendt imagines the concrete framework of politics. She argues for non-nationalist policies structured as a federation, a structure she also imagines for world politics. In the essay *Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World?* she argues that «[p]olitically, the new fragile unity brought about by technical mastery over the earth can be guaranteed only within a framework of universal mutual agreements, which eventually would lead into a world-wide federated structure»[46].

In the same essay, she pleads against a world state, since it would be the end of all citizenship, and the end of politics.[47] Her criticism against the world state is based on her political conceptions such as plurality, diversity but also boundaries, territorial as well as political. But Arendt also points out the dangers of 'political globalization', for this could turn out to be 'an unbearable burden', evoking «political apathy, isolationist nationalism, or desperate rebellion against all powers that be rather than enthusiasm or a desire for the revival of humanism»[48].

Arendt might not always have been correct in her interpretations and distinctions as a philosopher. However, her sharp and penetrating political judgments might still prove their usefulness in evaluating the events of the 21st century. Only a critical elaboration of contemporary political philosophy, taking into account Arendt's insights, will tell.

References

[1] The European Union is in these debates often regarded as a prototype of 'how a new order could function', but also as an example of 'what its limits are'.
[2] Arendt, H. (1990) *Essays in Understanding*. New York: Schocken Books. P. 143, 157.
[3] Ibid, p. 143.
[4] Arendt, H. (1967) *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt. P. xviii. Further referred to by *OT*.
[5] Canovan, M. (1999) Is there an Arendtian case for the nation state? In: Garrath W. (2006) *Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers: Hannah Arendt*. London, New York: Routledge. P. 47
[6] Though Arendt deals rather superficially with public institutions in *The Human Condition*, they are not missing in her account. In *On Revolution*, she makes up for this lack.
[7] Brunkhorst, H. (1999) *Hannah Arendt*. Verlag C.H. Beck. Müchen. P. 84.
[8] *OT*, p. 138.
[9] *OT*, p. 124.
[10] *OT*, p. 126.
[11] *OT*, p. 138. Margaret Canovan remarks that in Arendt's theory, imperialism is the opposite of nationalism construed as a sort of national pride that prompted nation-states to conquer territory in ruthless pursuit of national interests. See: Canovan, op.cit, p. 47.
[12] *OT*, p. 126.
[13] *OT*, p. 127.
[14] Ibid.
[15] *OT*, p. 123–124.
[16] *OT*, p. 139.
[17] Ibid.
[18] *OT*, p. 140.
[19] *OT*, p. 141.
[20] Arendt, H. (1958) *The Human Condition*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press. P. 234.
[21] Arendt, H. (1961) *Between Past and Future*. London: Penguin Books. P. 165.
[22] Arendt (1958), op.cit, p. 234.
[23] Ibid, p. 235.
[24] *OT*, p. 144.
[25] *OT*, p. 230.
[26] Ibid.
[27] *OT*, p. 230.
[28] Ibid.
[29] *OT*, p. 291.
[30] *OT*, p. 230.
[31] *OT*, p. 295.
[32] *OT*, p. 278.
[33] *OT*, p. 292/
[34] Arendt, H. (1963/1990) *On Revolution*. London: Penguin Books. P. 158. Further referred to as *OR*.
[35] Brunkhorst, op. cit., p. 90.
[36] *OT*, p. 229.
[37] *OT*, p. 231. Arendt also states the reason: «The reason why highly developed political communities, such as the ancient city-states or modern nation-states, so often insist on ethnic homogeneity is that they hope to eliminate as far as possible those natural and always present differences and differentiations which by themselves arouse dumb hatred, mistrust, and discrimination[.]» (*OT*, p. 301).

[38] *OT*, p. 166.

[39] Arendt (1990), op. cit., p. 206. In this book review, she claims that this is the question Delos poses. However, it is her own question as well.

[40] *OR*, p. 157.

[41] *OR*, p. 151.

[42] *OR*, p. 151–152.

[43] *OR*, p. 153.

[44] Arendt, H. (1970) *On Violence*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace&C°. P. 6.

[45] See for example: Habermas, J. (1996/1999) *The Inclusion of the Other. Studies in Political Theory*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. P. 139–140: «Given the challenges that confront us today, I want to argue, the communicative account of republicanism is more appropriate than either an ethnonational or even a communitarian conception of the nation, the rule of law, and democracy».

[46] Arendt, H. (1968) *Men in dark times*. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. P. 93.

[47] Ibid, 82.

[48] Ibid, 83.

SUICIDE FOR POLITICAL ENDS: WHEN KILLING ONESELF BECOMES A FORM OF ACTION

Adam Dunn*

Abstract

I mean to look at the boundary Arendt creates around the political realm with the use of a peculiar example. This will be the suicide of Hirade Kiyohide, retainer to the Japanese lord Oda Nobunaga, as a method of protest. His death was accompanied by a letter, detailing his dissatisfaction with the young Nobunaga's conduct. Hirade's suicide seems to fit Arendt's concept of action well, although it actually deviates from it in several respects. He put biological necessity to one side for the sake of a public realm and set of principles, something emphasized in Arendt's discussions of political freedom. In the way he put aside necessity, he referenced it in a particular way which brought it out 'into the open' of the public as most kinds of action do not. I will contend that this does not disqualify his suicide as an example of action, as some of Arendt's own examples involve necessity in a similar way, particularly Achilles. I will also use this example to look at the relationship between action and principles, as Arendt uses these terms. Hirade's protest was regarding Oda's failure to conform to his role within the feudal system. It was thus an example of action inspired by a principle of government, along similar lines to the use Arnedt makes of the term 'principle'. In spite of the conceptual blurs found in such a case, Arendt's distinction between labour, work and action is still valuable. Both Hirade's method (suicide as protest) and aim (reinforcement of feudal norms) are borderline cases of what Arendt would admit into public/political. This border element is what makes the case worth examining.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, Hirade KiYohide, suicide, action, political freedom.

Introduction

Hirade Kiyohide was a retainer to Oda Nobunaga, a Japanese feudal lord, during the latter's youth (6, p. 68). Oda refused, upon inheritance, to take his new duties seriously, something which Hirade repeatedly attempted to rectify (6, p. 305). Hirade's concerns are directly related to a common, if not properly public, realm. He could be seen as essentially trying to prevent Oda remaining irresponsible, childlike. We may also talk about him acting under the guidance of a principle, in either Arendt's or Montesquieu's sense.

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Initially, I want to discuss Hirade's final attempt to persuade Oda to take up his feudal duties, which took place in 1553. This attempt consisted of Hirade putting his feelings into letter form and then killing himself in a ritualised manner, a practice of protest known as kanshi (6, p. 305), which was rare but not unprecedented.

Method

In relating what could plausibly be an Arendtian approach to kanshi, we can briefly touch on a few of her comments regarding suicide 'in general'. She seems at one point to approve of the notion that «suicide is a noble gesture to escape a life that has become burdensome» in opposition to claims made for the sanctity of bare life as such (2, p. 315). In that sort of case, we may still talk about an actor's conscious shaping of their story, as Achilles' own death in battle worked to preserve the integrity of his life's story (2, cf. p. 193–194). However this does not appear to be the relationship between necessity and one's persona which is established in any cases of public suicide, like Hirade's. In the case of suicides for a public, biological necessity appears with the agent in public, perhaps tainting the common discourse. One can distinguish between coercive and non-coercive uses of one's mortality in public discourse very easily. For coercive purposes, one must associate a particular claim or desire with the declared aim of not living in the event of non-fulfilment. For this to work, of course one's life (or the consequences of its ceasing) must matter to another more than costs associated with compliance. In this sort of case, it's easy to see that politics is corrupted by an attempted subversion of the other's capacity for free action. Hirade differs in that his death and his statement of intent occured simultaneously, without threat established as link between the two. Instead, we should note that Hirade gained no coercive influence as a result of his suicide, rather suffering the same broad unpredictability of consequences as we find in Arendt's description of public acts (2, p. 191–192).

We might note a certain pathos, or desperation, in the last act of a desperate retainer, tinged with the feeling of having failed in his earlier attempts to persuade Oda to mend his ways. If Oda had continued to shirk his duties, to live like an unruly child, Hirade would have presumably been lost to history. In this way, we can see a link to the account Arendt gives of courage as pre-requisite for participation in the public realm (1, p. 448). This particular description of courage focuses on the disdain with which one must treat physical comforts and safeties, in order to give up the merely animal life of labour and consumption for public engagement (1, p. 448). This is merely a particularly severe form of this gamble, in which the stake is definitely lost, whether or not one gains any content for one's persona. There's only time to note in passing that the solitary nature of this act puts it at odds with Arendt's later focus, in Civil Disobedience, on intersubjective consensus-building.

Topic

We turn now to what I'd tentatively call the 'content' of Hirade's actions. This could again be sub-divided further. On the one hand, we have to look at the match between principles and actions, with relation to the actor, to Hirade-as-revealed-through-doing. On the other hand we have the constitution of this action as conducted for the benefit of a particular other, rather than a public 'in general'.

For Another

We may note briefly Arendt's description of the hostile relationship between biological necessity and individuality. While Hirade's individuated story isn't affected by this, it might yet be effaced by the very specificity of its aims. The concern here relates to the structural relationship of care between the two men and mirrors Heidegger's description of solicitous Dasein 'stepping into' the place of the other (3, cf. p. 158). This could be the case here, although, of the two, it seems Hirade is the more likely to be effaced. This is because his acts all point towards Oda in a way that, on the surface, leaves no trace of his own self. Another concerned retainer might just as well have stepped into the same role, or so it seems. However, if we allow this in this case, it becomes difficult to find cases of action where a similar claim could not be made. Instead, it seems to me that Hirade's suicide remains action because it points beyond the singularity of Oda by pointing beyond to a principle. Almost by definition, anything related to claims of what is properly adult must reach to both sides of public and private, as it is an attempt to 'call out' to someone who remains in the latter. Part of this calling out must involve claiming (at least implicitly) what sorts of qualities differ between these two ways of being. In doing so, it must reach beyond the public, perhaps even in discussion of what may take place in one to best prepare for the other. We might, justifiably, argue that the system Hirade was recommending was unable to offer a full experience of public glory, that he was really advocating the exchange of one kind of impoverished life for another. Against this, it might be said that even advocacy of non-political ways of life constitute action. This seems to be a good description in Hirade's case and, if we are to make anything of this claim, we must consider this in terms of 'principles'.

Principles and Actors

Principles are not often discussed in literature about Arendt and her own description of them occurs in two-thirds of a page in *What is Freedom?* She attributes the inspiration for this to Montesquieu's description of principles as «that which sets [governments] in motion» (4, p. 21) and gives them a similar role in relation to the acting individual (1, p. 445). Arendt also links principles to freedom, claiming their enaction and freedom are coexistant. In fact, she talks about freedom manifesting only during the 'performing act' related to the principle 1, p. 445).

When Arendt contrasts principles to motives, it is on the grounds that principles lack the level of precision necessary to prescribe particular acts, somehow reaching beyond the narrow particularity of the given situation (1, p. 445). There is, however, the question of how exactly one gets from the abstract principle down to the particular. This is clearly a matter of judgment, understood in almost any sense, more specifically a matter of exegesis. I think we can find a certain freedom in this exegetical work, a freedom which hovers ambiguously between an Arendtian public freedom and a freedom of the will.

The way in which this applies to Hirade should be fairly obvious, although it is by no means clear that this sort of structure is apparent in all instances of action. An actor need not, it seems to me, always knowingly address a principle when he acts. The matching of principle to act could therefore be, occasionaly, something for the story-teller to sort out after.

In Hirade's case, I don't believe this sort of 'reading in' of a principle is necessary. Indeed, we can find here two seemigly distinct principles at work and this does raise the question of whether a single action can call on more than one principle. On the one hand, there is the possibility of describing Hirade's prescription for Oda in terms of a principle of government. On the other, there is Hirade's own relation to his duty as retainer.

This relationship to duty was explicitly recognised as a principle in its own right, bushido, roughly analogous to European ideas of chivalry (6, cf. p. 298 ff). We might also accept it as a motivating principle for the Japanese government of the time, as Montesqueieu took honour to be the principle for monarchies (4, Book 3, Chapter 6). The two are rather similar, so we cannot accept only one but not the other to Montesqueiu's usage. Bushido was also the subject of several books, written both by and for those attempting to follow it. Most famously, this includes Hagakure, with its detailed instructions regarding appearance and manners, extolling sincerity and providing by instruction what Hirade provided by example. Writing Hagakure (5) involves the same exegetical approach, more obviously perhaps that in the case of the actor, since the exegesis alone is what becomes displayed in public. As for the principle Hirade pointed towards for Oda, this is a little harder to pin down exactly. It seems to me that was appealing to a fairly common set of values, particularly sincerity, seriousness and taking up one's responsibilities in the right spirit. While I said above that Hirade was appealing for Oda to step into a public persona, I did not at that point link to an idea of generality. I believe that we could do so more easily now, if we accept that Hirade was recommending that the common realm (and people in it) ought to relate a certain way. We might also think that the call was for Oda to play his part in a principle, and a world, held in common.

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POLITICS, DEMOCRACY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

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Abstract

The object of the paper is to discuss Arendt's concept of politics, as completely distinct from the concept of social, and her concept of democracy. I argue, on referring namely to Claude Lefort's analysis, that the concept of politics was developed by Arendt in opposition to her concept of totalitarianism, in which certainly there is its value. However, it does not take in account the complexity of the idea and real development of modern democracy. In some respects, Arendt's concept of democracy is very radical, even revolutionary, while in other respects it is conservative and even reactionary. I argue that modern democracy can not be conceived only as a purely political phenomenon, but also as a social world of relations governed by – to use Tocqueville's expression – the principle of «equality of conditions». Therefore, it does not seem either possible or desirable to separate democratic politics from the "social question". But it is important to understand that the latter, in turn, should not be separated from the free exercise of political rights, legal conflicts of interests and open public debates. Thus, I assume that democracy needs a larger concept of politics than the one Arendt proposed, a concept which, in a way, includes the «social question» without by no means betraying the importance of civic freedom. Such a concept was proposed by Lefort for whom politics is primordially a projection of a whole «form of society».

Keywords: politics, democracy, totalitarianism, modernity, social question, revolution, form of society.

Is Arendt's concept of politics suitable to explain the contemporary condition of democracy? Can it provide us – and it is certainly not the same question – with a regulating idea of what democracy (democratic politics) should be? Is it in concordance with the modern meaning of democracy? Or, maybe, with a post-modern one? I will try to answer these questions, although the answer can be neither simple nor unequivocal. The relation between Arendt's concept of politics and what we usually mean by democracy – or, at least, by modern democracy – is particularly ambiguous. In some respects, her concept of politics is extremely democratic, while in other regards it is clearly undemocratic. It presents, indeed, a curious mixture of approving and disapproving, progressive

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and reactionary attitude towards the reality of modern democracy and towards its very idea.

In my analysis, I will refer especially to the thought of Claude Lefort. The confrontation of his thought to that of Arendt seems to me both natural and instructive: the two authors are known as critics of totalitarianism, classics of the reflection on the totalitarian phenomenon, but also as those who devoted most of their attention to rethinking what politics is and the proper meaning of the political itself. There are, no doubt, many similarities between their ways of thinking, namely between the ways in which they conceived and criticized totalitarianism. But the differences between their approaches are equally striking, especially as to what exactly politics is and, consequently, as to the meaning of modern democracy. Lefort was perfectly aware of these similarities and differences as well – he expressed it in a text devoted to Hannah Arendt, «Hannah Arendt et la question du politique», in his *Essais sur le politique, XIX–XX siècles*[1]. Subscribing, to a large extent, to her concept and criticism of totalitarianism, he marks there his distance to her concept of politics, revealing its anti-modern and, *in fine*, anti-democratic character. According to Lefort, what is troubling in Arendt's thought and what, finally, marks its failure is its lack of interest in the process of modern democracy, or its incapacity to think it out. Is Lefort right? In fact, his remarks on Arendt's concept of politics are very scarce. Let us reconstruct the main lines of this concept, following Lefort as far as it is possible, but going beyond his statements.

Lefort is certainly right in emphasizing the link between Arendt's concept of politics and what she defined as totalitarianism. Strictly speaking, Arendt's concept of politics was elaborated in the exact opposition to her concept of totalitarianism. In her view, totalitarianism meant, all in all, a dissolution, a suppression of politics.[2] Certainly, totalitarianism can be seen as the supremacy of politics over all other spheres of life, as an extreme politicisation of society and of privacy itself. But such an extreme politicisation is paradoxically tantamount to a complete depolitisation, to the elimination of politics as such, or as a specific domain of activity. In Arendt's interpretation, totalitarian policies, suppressing the difference between the individual, society and the state, submitting all spheres of social and private life to the ideological central power, resulted in fact from the victory of the social over the political. In other words, totalitarianism would be an extreme, but logical consequence of the emergence of mass society, preoccupied much more by economical issues than by freedom[3]. From that Arendt draws the conclusion that the most important, if not the only, guarantee against the totalitarian deviation would consist in maintaining the radical distinction between the social sphere, defined by labor and production, and the politics, defined by free action, autonomous from any necessities.[4] This means in particular that politics should have nothing to do with the so called social question, or the question of socio-economic emancipation and distributive justice. In exactly this point Lefort, although broadly sharing Arendt's views as to the nature of totalitarianism, as to the disappearance of politics within it and the necessity of

the autonomy of politics in a non-totalitarian regime, apparently does feel no sympathy to her position.

Before, however, considering the essential points of the divergence between the two authors, let's examine Arendt's concept of politics in the light of what we usually mean by modern democracy – regardless of what Lefort himself says in the matter.

On the one hand or considered at a certain level, Arendt's concept of politics coincides with the idea of radical democracy. First of all, Arendt emphasizes, at the same time, freedom and equality as fundamental conditions of political activity – exactly in the way the theorists of democracy emphasize them as the conditions and main values of any democratic practice. Moreover, in agreement with many democratic theories, Arendt underlines the «artificial», constructed, non-natural character of equality: men are not born as equals, but the art of politics – of democracy – is to treat them as equals, provided they are citizens, and to assure them the legal conditions to act as if they were equals. In other words, the specificity and the very ends of politics – of democracy – are to provide all individuals with the opportunity to *become* equal.[5] *A fortiori,* Arendt's concept of freedom is in a perfect agreement with the democratic, and not only the liberal, notion of it. She conceives freedom as being essentially freedom *to* – and not simply freedom *from*, i. e. as a positive, and not only negative freedom, as a freedom of acting, of involving oneself in the public sphere, a freedom to co-create the common life. In the end, freedom is for her – as for all democrats - the synonym of self-government. Thanks to this freedom, possible only in being-with-others, individuals transcend themselves or their own particularity, entering the light of the common and public. Although – and this is the liberal moment of Arendt's thought – this transcending of oneself by entering the dimension of the common does not – should not – suppress the exceptionality of the individual and the differences which separate him/her from others.[6] To sum up, Arendt's concept of freedom, fundamental to her concept of politics, combines the republican and liberal moments comprised in the modern concept of democratic freedom.

Arendt's concept of politics corresponds not only with the general democratic intuitions, but with the very radical ones, when she insists on the necessity, for the authentic politics, to avoid and/or eliminate the difference between the governors and the governed. In other words, when her concept of politics coincides with the idea of a participatory and direct democracy, opposed to a merely representative, parliamentary, or indirect one. As it is known, Arendt criticized the party system founding the modern parliamentarism. In her eyes, only the spontaneous public activity of all concerned citizens fulfils the conditions of the authentic politics, or authentic freedom.[7] As model examples of such politics and such freedom, she evoked the ancient Greek *polis*, namely the Athenian[8], but also – in her book on revolution – the *soviets*, which appeared not only at the beginning of the October revolution, before they were broken by the Leninist party, but also during the Hungarian revolution of 1956, which all expressed the popular will of self-government[9].

Thus, the last point of the coincidence between Arendt's concept of politics and the modern idea of democracy is the positive evaluation of the very idea of revolution – conceived not as a violent change in power, but as a new beginning, the inauguration of a new order of freedom and equality.[10] Insofar Arendt appreciates the revolutionary phenomenon and, what is more, the liberal and egalitarian ideas as the mainspring of revolution, she speaks in favor of modernity with its logics of liberal and democratic emancipation. And it is easy to show that, even when she refers to the idealized ancient Greek model of politics, she perceives it through the prism of the quite modern categories of individual rights and democratic public sphere. Similarly, when she evaluates a critical, innovating, even disruptive – revolutionary – attitude towards tradition, which she applies to Greeks, it is easy to show that, in fact, she prizes in this way an essential moment of what can be called the project of modernity.

However, on the other hand or considering the problem at another level, Arendt's concept of politics appears as decidedly anti-modern and anti-democratic. And the very source of such character of it is just the radical distinction, even the opposition, between the political and social spheres. In fact, while Arendt's concept of politics corresponds with, and even radicalizes the modern idea of democracy understood as a purely political regime, it completely fails in understanding and explaining the modern democracy in its social dimension. Meanwhile, since the classical analysis of democracy by Tocqueville, the latter has been understood at once as a political regime and as a whole form of society, based on the principle of «equality of conditions»[11]. The equality of conditions is not only the equality of political rights, but also that of opportunities, which include the economical dimension. In other terms, democracy in its modern meaning embraces the «social question» – which, according to Arendt, can only corrupt the free political practice and, ultimately, lead to totalitarianism.[12]

From this point of view, it is certainly not by accident if Arendt's favourite reference remains the ancient *polis*, in which the economic dimension of social life was reduced to the private sphere, clearly distinct from the public or the political one. Certainly, Arendt is far from assuming that social-economic inequalities are quite unimportant to the right functioning of politics, or for freedom. But she states that inequalities at this level, or the poverty, should be overcome by merely technical means which have nothing to do with the authentic politics. Therefore, she states that the «social question» should never become a political one.[13]

Such a statement is obviously in conflict with the real process of the modern democratization, through which the autonomy of politics has always been relative, always related to some socio-economic interests of different groups and classes. Moreover, it is in conflict with the very modern idea of democracy insofar the latter implies the ideas of emancipation and justice through the «equality of conditions».

What are the reasons of such discordance? Is it due to Arendt's hostility to the modern? Still, as I have tried to point out, her concept of politics is very modern in some respects. Even her critique of the modern

historicism or belief in progress seems hyper-modern rather than conservative since it is lead at the name of freedom and novelty of event. No, it is not the modern spirit that lacks in Arendt's thought. What lacks there, is rather the sensibility to the social in all its complexity. In fact, the distinction, turning into opposition, that Arendt establishes between the social and the political is very doubtful and can be said quite arbitrary. Her concept of the social is incompatible with both Marxian and liberal interpretations of our every day activities, especially work. She oversees the part of action or *praxis* comprised in the social-economic sphere. In particular, her concept of labor – as serving only to maintain and reproduce life – neglects both the creative dimension of any acting on nature and the importance of human relation tied up when working together. In short, Arendt's error in conceiving the social is to neglect the part of freedom contained in it, or its capacity to transcend itself, to turn into politics, namely into political conflicts.

Correspondingly, her main error in thinking politics would be to conceive it as a kind of Heaven free from any social burden, and so from any substance. One could conclude that her concept of political is much more esthetical than ethical. Free creation and beauty would be more essential for political action than any substantial collective goal – quite like in Nietzsche.

With a kind of heroism, Arendt looks for «purity», for «pure» freedom and politics, refusing to consider the obscure, social and material origins of action and the links between all spheres of human life and activity. At a deeper, ontological level, she refuses dialectics, preferring non-dialectical oppositions which prevent her from thinking the interconnections or correlations between the social and the political.

In all these respects, Lefort's political philosophy is very different and much more in concordance both with the real process and with the very idea of the modern democracy. Lefort manages it thanks to the distinction – absent from Arendt's reflection – between the politics (*la politique*) and the political (*le politique)*. Democracy, in opposition to totalitarianism, implies – as in Arendt's views – a separation between politics and society, or between the sphere of political power in the narrow sense, and the spheres of economy, law, science, culture, education, etc. But this separation is a result of the previous constitution of democracy as a form of society – and this constitution itself is *political*.[14] Within the political constitution of democracy as a form of society, the special role of politics is to represent society to itself. Political sphere in a narrow sense and, more particularly, political conflicts between different actors and groups, or parties, become in this way a stage on which citizens can represent, recognize and seek to solve their vital problems. So, the border between politics and the social sphere is permeable: all social, cultural and economic conflicts can and should appear on the political stage. And, *vice versa*, politics can, and should, act on different social phenomena and problems, providing an interpretation and seeking a solution to them. Within democracy as a form of society politics and the social sphere are then separate but necessarily interconnected. This interconnection is assured by the fact

that in democracy power is – as Lefort puts it – an «empty place», i. e. nobody can identify himself with the power or dominate the political stage for a long time.[15]

There is no space here to present the whole concept of democracy and of politics/political elaborated by Lefort. I refer to his thought only to outline a different possibility, comparing to that of Arendt's, of perceiving the status of politics and its relationship to the social. A way of thinking which is certainly no less anti-totalitarian than the one proposed by Arendt, but is unambiguously pro-modern and pro-democratic. I do not conceal that this perspective, or Lefort's position, is more appealing to me.

However, the last point is to find out whether such a position can be, today, more than a moral postulation. Is a theory such as that of Lefort still capable of explaining the dynamics of contemporary societies and the status of democratic activities within them? In fact, there are many signs of crisis or retreat of democracy nowadays, also in so called «advanced democratic countries». It is legitimate to ask if, in our globalizing, post-communist and post-modern world, where politics seems helpless against economics, turning into a mere spectacle, where the party system is broadly contested and where political activity is regenerating mainly in the form of local movements; where differences between individuals are easily accepted, but as easily turned into new inequalities – if in such a world the ambiguous, democratic/antidemocratic concept of politics proposed by Arendt is not more relevant than the really democratic and modern Lefort's vision.

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(RE)THINKING THE «PUBLIC SPHERE» WITH ARENDT AND HABERMAS

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Abstract

The term «public» is polysemantic; its meaning varies accordingly to that what is actually articulated by the opposition «private/public», which in turn may be regarded from this or that angle and in various contexts. Nevertheless, there is one meaning of the term, which is especially relevant to a contemporary political philosophy: «publicness» refers here to a key principle of a solidary political community and of the politics beyond the play of mere instrumental concerns. «Public sphere» is the notion, which is simultaneously empirical and normative: this principle is largely institutionalized in modern democracies, yet it embodies the utopian expectations transcending any empirically possible form and state of political life.

Reasoning about the «public sphere», thuswise understood, occurred in the 20th century's political thought for the greater part in a nostalgic and pessimistic manner; however, in the nineties the democratic optimism was worldwide associated just with the multidimensional developments of the public sphere. Realities of the capitalist globalization crossed out a lot of naïve hopes, yet the idea of «public» remains its significance, be it in the context of the «democratization of democracy» or in the post-communist settings.

In the paper it is intended to discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of the conceptions of a «public sphere» in Habermas and Arendt with respect to theorizing the actual transformations and emancipatory potential of the public sphere.

Keywords: Arendt, Habermas, political philosophy, social theory, public sphere, publicness, social imaginary.

The term «public» is obviously polysemantic; its meaning varies accordingly to that what is actually articulated by the opposition «private/public», which in turn may be regarded from diverse angles and in various contexts. Michael Warner (Warner, 2002: 29) distinguishes in particular the following meanings of public and private: open to everyone/restricted to some; accessible for money/closed even to those who could pay; state-related; now often called public sector/nonstate, belonging to civil society; now often called private sector; official/nonofficial; common/special; impersonal/personal; national or popular/group, class, or locale; in physical

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view of others/concealed; outside the home/domestic, circulated in print or electronic media/circulated orally or in manuscript; known widely/known to initiates; acknowledged and explicit/tacit and implicit.

Nevertheless, there is one meaning of the term «public» which is especially relevant to the modern social and political thinking: «publicness» refers here to the constitutive element of a politics as far as it transcends the play of mere instrumental concerns. «Publicness"»understood in this way embraces three analytically distinctive aspects or ingredients: first, a specific normative principle of the legitimate political decision-making, second, a peculiar space of communication, that is the public sphere, and, third, an ensemble of specific publics.

As the normative principle, «publicness» implies that any regulation or course of governmental action, in order to be recognized as legitimate, should be mediated and approved by the public deliberations which are exercised by principally free and equal citizens and are principally open to everybody to whom the issues at stake may concern. «Publicness» is one of the core elements of the democratic legitimacy of any institution.

The public sphere of a society may be treated as the communicative space which is situated «between» the domains of private life and the bureaucratic state apparatuses and is constituted and reproduced by the interplay of the broad multiplicity of publics. It is worth mentioning that publics are not mere communities or groups of people. According to Michael Warner, «A public is a social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse» (Warner, 2002: 90). A public is an association of strangers which is essentially mediated by various texts, be it verbal or visual, which comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation.

Although the significance of the «strong publics» within the official public sphere constituted by the institutions of political representation is incontestable, it is worth emphasizing the fundamental role of the unofficial public sphere which is generated and maintained by the multidimensional interplay of the «weak publics», that is of the self-organized social movements, civic, cultural and artistic associations. While not making immediately the obligative political decisions, the «weak publics» are an influential factor of articulating the political will. The unofficial public sphere is just that communicative space which originates ideas, viewpoints, opinions, preferences and outlooks constituting social self-understanding.

Anonymous public deliberations proceed largely just in the interlinking of various «weak publics» and then in their interactions with «strong publics», and those deliberations are fruitful if they are regulated in a lesser or greater degree by some meta-norms. In particular, everybody whose interests are actually or potentially touched by the consequences is recognized as a rightful participant; all participants have equal rights to ask and to criticize, to initiate new themes and standpoints, and to contest the actually valid norms of communication if they are proved to be derogatory to somebody's rights.

Reflections on the actual state and the dynamic tendencies of the «public sphere» are marked in the 20th century's political thought for the greater

part by nostalgia and pessimism. Democratization of the public sphere as a result of the tension between its initial elitist character and its organizing principle of openness enabled easier access to it and that in turn implicated degradation of the public discourse: the conformist tendency overbalanced the rational-critical attitude. The public opinion lost its critical potential; its studying is widely used for purposes of social engineering; the public communication become rather an object of administering and is substituted by the «publicity», that is of an instrumental publicness associated with advertising and public relations. The deepening impotence of the public sphere in the late capitalist mass societies is added by its fragmentation, by shrinking the public spaces and people's encapsulating in private life.

However, that pessimistic diagnosis of the irreversible degradation of the public sphere in contemporary societies is one-dimensional and overhasty, which was demonstrated in the nineties by the great interest in the transforming public spheres understood as one of the key factors of «democratization of democracy» in the western countries as well as of the post-communist development. It is reasonable to diagnose the multidimensional transformations of the public sphere in the world we live in now rather than its unidirectional degradation. I would mention here only four main factors responsible for the growing complexity of the public sphere nowadays. First, it is the irreducible and, moreover, increasing diversity and multiformity of publics, which are in complex and often conflicting relations; that implies the huge internal heterogeneity of the public sphere in any society. First, transformations of the social life engendered by the expansion of the electronic mass-media and IT implies a certain «virtualization» of the public sphere and the complex interplay of «real» and «virtual» in the public discourses. Third, the processes of globalization (or, better, glo*c*alization (Robertson, 2003)) generate the transnational public spheres which interact with the national and local ones. Four, the very separation of the private and the public shows their unstable and dynamic character and is largely politicized: that what belongs to the public realm is itself the issue of public deliberation, may be contested and redefined.

Confronting all these complexities, any attempt to properly conceptualize the public sphere must answer the following principal questions: first, what is the ontological status of publicness within the contemporary societies? Does it possess a kind of sociological reality or is it a mere moral ideal? How can its internal heterogeneity and its unstable character be thought?

Second, what could be an adequate model of the public sphere as of the space of peculiar social interactions?

Seeking to answer the above questions we can reasonably rely upon the classical conceptualizations of the phenomenon of publicness in Arendt and Habermas. It is well known that the both conceptions were strongly criticized. Nevertheless, some key elements of their conceptions retain their explanatory potential; I am going to use them for answering the above questions about conceptualization of the public sphere in the nowaday societies.

At the first gaze, the standpoint of Habermas appears to be more adequate to the realities of modern societies than that of Arendt. The latter seems to be based on the disorienting idealization of the Greek police. As she wrote in *The Human Condition*, the term «public», «means, first, that everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity» (Arendt, 1958: 50). Of course, all citizens of a polis could communicate face-to-face within an observable place, *agora*; but in the modern societies which are large-scale and complex formations the public life can't be organized on the communal bases. The public discourse is essentially mass-mediated and is only one mode of coordinating human actions in a society together with the state administering and the market. The modern concept of publicness, unlike the ancient, depends on the possibility of counterpoising the society to the state; the public sphere is produced and reproduced by the interconnected discoursive practices of private persons.

In these regards, the Habermasian treating of the phenomenon of publicness seems to possess more historical and sociological correctness than that of Arendt. However, Habermas, in his turn, was wrong in absolutizing one – historically specific – form of modern public, the bourgeois public sphere, which he identified with the public sphere as such. According to Habermas, social differences among the participants of the public discourse are irrelevant to its organizing principles and should not be taken into account in the public sphere so that the latter appears to be essentially homogeneous. That depiction is obviously an unjustified idealization. The Arendtian treating which emphasized the moment of diversity in the world of public life corresponds better to the internal heterogeneity of the public sphere. The public life of classical Greece, she wrote, consisted «to an incredibly large extent of citizens talking with one another. In this incessant talk the Greeks discovered that the world we have in common is usually regarded from an infinite number of different standpoints, to which correspond the most diverse points of view… In a sheer inexhaustible flow of arguments, Greeks learned to understand – not to understand one another as individual persons, but to look upon the same world from another's standpoint, to see the same in very different and frequently opposing aspects» (Arendt, 1961: 51).

To do justice, it's worth mentioning that, first, the false homogenizing vision of the public sphere in Habermas was corrected by some of his followers (see, for example: Fraser, 1992), and second, differences within the public sphere should be considered as related mostly not to the differences between individual standpoints but rather to the social and political differences between various publics. As a result, we have a vision of the public sphere as of the heterogeneous and hierarchically organized space in which some publics dominate whereas some others are dominated. The boundaries of the public sphere are unstable because they are defined by the dominated publics and are contested by the «subaltern counterpublics» (to use the Nancy Fraser's term).

But if the public sphere consists of the multiplicity of – often conflicting – publics, how then can we speak of its unity? I believe that the

plausible answer is: by means of rethinking it in the processual terms. Public discussion is not a finite undertaking which results in the definitive consent but rather the ongoing and never ended process in which agreement is always only partial and transient. Public deliberation is a goal in itself, and not mere a tool for producing true decision. Arendt stressed that understanding which can be achieved through processes of communication is principally different from the uniform scientific truth, she wrote in *Truth and Politics* (Arendt, 1961: 51) that «every claim in the sphere of human affairs to an absolute truth, whose validity need no support from the side of opinion, strikes at the very roots of all politics and of all government». The public sphere not so much immediately reconciles existing disagreements and conflicts as makes them visible and transparent in their nature; by means of that the participants of public discourses become more capable of managing conflicts. Moreover, they become more receptive to the real complexity of the world they live in, and on this way the human solidarity emerges while the differences and even the acute contradictions still remain.

From that processual treating of the public sphere we can get a solution also of the dilemma: is publicness a sociological reality or a rather a moral ideal contraposed to reality. «Publicness» is the notion, which is simultaneously empirical and normative: this principle is largely institutionalized in modern democracies, yet it embodies the utopian expectations transcending any empirically possible form and state of political life.

The second principal question to be answered focuses on the adequate model of the public sphere understood as a peculiar space of social interaction. For answering that question, we need first of all to break with the habit to think of the public sphere in a static manner as of specific regional subsystem of a society having its «place» together with economic, political, cultural and other subsystems. As Mimi Sheller and John Urry stressed, there is a tendency in the existing literature to think of the phenomenon of publicness in terms of «spheres» and «spaces», concepts that are often static and «regional» in character (Sheller, Urry, 2003: 107–108). When we speak of the «public sphere», the term «sphere» means a virtual space of communication rather than the regional subsystem of a society. That key moment is expressed well in Habermas: the mode of social interaction in the public sphere is the mass-mediated talk among citizens on the issues of common interest and concern. However, the weakness of the Habermasian treating consists in his rationalist illusions concerning the circulation of public discourses: formation of the enlightened public opinion is regarded as a result of the public use of reason. Taking into account the scope and influence of the electronic mass-mediation, we should treat public discourses nor as (at least potentially) rational-critical discussion on the common good but rather as circulation of ideas and images in which the shared vision of the world (as well as identities of the participants) are formed. And that treating can rely upon some ideas borrowed from Arendt. In particular, the second meaning of the term «public» she defines as «the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it» (Arendt, 1958: 52). Characterizing

the world as related to the publicness, she understood it also as created through founding actions: constitution is essentially something similar to the world-making. Generalizing that idea over the extraordinary example of the American revolution, we may think of publicness as of the creative world-making, and so both in the periods of the radical changes and in the times of the relative stability. Thus we advert to the concept of «social imaginary». That concept is in wide use now just in relation with the actual experiences of instability of the social world as well as with taking into account the unprecedented role of electronically mediated and socially organized imagination. Needless to argue that social imaginary has nothing to do with fantasies and voluntary fictions; it is a constitutive element of social practices which organizes individuals' self-understanding and their hold on reality. Relying upon the work of, first of all, Cornelius Castoriadis (Castoriadis, 1975) and Charles Taylor (Taylor, 2004), we can specify here some features of social imaginary. It is the engaged practical understanding, which embraces not only the near social environment of people but the total social world as well. It is represented in the symbolic systems and endues institutions with its peculiar meaning. It works as the «invisible cement», which holds together a large scale community of the human beings. The social imaginary as a shared practical understanding is «both factual and normative; that is, we have a sense of how things usually go, but this is interwoven with an idea of how they ought to go» (Taylor, 2004: 23). The social imaginary in any society is multidimensional and heterogeneous so that it should be rather said about the social imaginaries (in plural). The social imaginary is always inherently underdetermined and unstable; it leaves wide scope for the stabilizing interpretations and correcting re-interpretations. Any careful analyses of the social imaginary formation should take into account both its spontaneous geneses in the grass-roots routines of day-to-day life and the symbolic struggles, the stake of which is the legitimate view on a social world.

From that standpoint the communicative interactions in the public sphere mediates not only formation of the enlightened public opinion concerning the common good but more widely also formation and transformation of the social imaginary the dynamics of which embraces the processes of world-making as well as of identity formation. The concept of «social imaginary», as it was outlined above, provides us with the promising analytical tools which enable, in particular, to consider the relation between the tendencies of autonomization and of instrumentalization within the public sphere. I believe that the dilemma: does the public sphere possess the potential of autonomy and emancipation or is it a mere subject of manipulation, is false. We should rather analyze the unstable and ever shifting balances existing between diverse symbolic strategies pursued by a variety of actors within the public sphere (various and often conflicting publics, state agencies, corporations, etc.). Those strategies make use of the symbolic power the significance of which was influentially disclosed by Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1992), that is of the power to bring to reality through nomination. The symbolic strategies compensate the principal

incompleteness of the social world and enable to their agents to manage the latent potentialities available in the existing forms of social life.

The domination of any set of the symbolic strategies over the multidimensional space of social imaginary is nourished and, simultaneously, limited by the spontaneous geneses of the social imaginaries in the routines of day-to-day life. That means that the «superstructural» articulation of the imaginary space through symbolic strategies should be considered itself as relying upon the «infrastructural» economy of the social imaginaries in a given society. However, the task of proper comprehension of those grass-roots dynamics of publicness in the hypercomplex contexts of glocalization can't be achieved only through appeal to the ideas of Arendt and Habermas, it implies rather a dialog with the social theory which is seeking to conceptualize the realities of the changing world in the early 21st century.

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BOUNDARIES OF THE POLITICAL IN ARENDT'S THOUGHT: THE EXCLUSION OF THE SOCIAL QUESTION

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Abstract

Injustice and suffering had always been on the agenda probably since the beginning of the social life of humankind. It might be claimed that seeing others exposed to injustice and suffering somehow makes all of us uncomfortable and creates pity and compassion. That is why dealing with poverty and questions of distribution have been one of the basic concerns throughout human history. However, it might be also argued that in an age of globalization, different forms of injustice such as gender inequality, poverty, and malnutrition, economic and social inequality have come to the fore in an intensified manner at the global level. In this sense, political theorists who are concerned with the question of social justice have given much effort to conceptualize politics and the political in a way to deal with the problem of social and economic inequality. In this way, Arendt constitutes a striking and to a certain extent «odd» figure in excluding 'the social question' («liberation of men from suffering») from the realm of politics and the political. Under the light of these concerns, this paper aims to analyze the boundaries of what is called political in Arendt's thought. By the help of such an analysis, I will try to reflect on if an Arendtian way of grasping the political and action is relevant in our age and if so, to what extent?

It is assumed that the concept of action constitutes the basis of what she understands from the political since action is essentially connected to the political. Action is political and bound to be political. Thus, first, in very general terms, I will try to portray what action means in Arendt's eyes by focusing on *Human Condition*. What are the characteristics of action? Secondly, I will focus on the conception of 'the social question' that she excludes from the category of action, so the political and will try to see if such a picture is helpful for us to imagine politics and the political in an age where the gap between rich and poor is being sharpened and claims of justice are being raised at the global level.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, political philosophy, social question, global inequality, justice, action.

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Introduction

Hannah Arendt, who was among the leading political thinkers of the 20th century, was an interesting figure in political theory in terms of her striking ideas and her contribution to our conceptions of democracy, public sphere, political action and history. Many contemporary theorists like Seyla Benhabib, Jürgen Habermas, Ronald Beiner, and Margaret Canovan refer to her conceptions of public sphere and political participation. This paper assumes that reflecting on Arendt's theory of action will give us significant and useful tools to discuss the meaning and the boundaries of what the political is in our times; particularly because of the way she conceptualises action and the relation between action and politics in her theory.[1]

One of the main and striking points one encounters in Arendt's definition of the political is the exclusion of 'the social question' and the social from the realm of politics. In this paper, I will aim to analyse the reasons of this exclusion and try to reflect on, from a much external point of view, to what extent sticking to such a strict separation between the political and the social is meaningful esp. under the conditions of deepening poverty and injustice. First, I aim to analyse her conception of action in order to have a firm grasp of what political means in Arendt's thought since, action is essentially portrayed as a political activity *per se*. Then I will try to reflect on to what extent we can consider such conceptualisation of the political as adequate under the conditions of our times.

In examining the reasons of the exclusion of the social question from the political realm, I will claim that action as the constitutive basis of the category of the political is defined by the characteristics which necessitate this exclusion itself from the very beginning. I will concentrate on «human plurality», «power» and «freedom» as three fundamental features that enable Arendt to exclude the social question from the political. We will also see that those three characteristics of action are connected to each other and they all belong to what is called the political rather than the social. However, first, I aim to give a brief idea about how and why action plays such a central and superior role in Arendt's theory by focusing particularly on the way she distinguishes among labour, work and action in *The Human Condition*.

Labor, Work and Action

In *The Human Condition* published in 1958, Hannah Arendt distinguishes three activities such as labor, work and action which constitute together the realm of *vita activa*, an active life corresponding to our relationships with the world. In this sense, *vita activa* refers to the activities related to our existence in the world, the conditioned existence of human beings. Labor, which is a form of *vita activa*, is the activity which corresponds to the human biological processes and refers to the activities of production and reproduction.[2] In this manner, labor is considered to be in the cycle of the necessities of life that includes production and reproduc-

tion of the necessities of human body and also human species. The human condition of labor is life itself. Life is bound to the repetitiveness of nature. Moreover, the things necessary for life process are the least durable and most quickly consummated ones.[3] Unlike work, the end of which comes when the object is finished and added to the durable world of things, labouring always moves in the same circle.

Labor is bound to both the necessity of man's own body and also the necessity of the nature. Going beyond this repetitive cycle, this «calamitous destiny» is possible only by creating a common and durable world. In other words, the remedy for the circularity of labor is outside the laboring activity: the activity of *homo faber* who is the subject of fabrication and making.

Unlike labor, work corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence and it is not fixed in ever-recurring life cycle. Work provides an artificial and durable world of things which is obviously different from natural life. Hence, the human condition of work is worldliness. *Homo faber* inserts his/her works of hands into the world of things after a fabrication process the end of which comes when the product has finished. According to Arendt, *homo faber* grasps the world in terms of productivity and relations of means and ends due to the mentality of his/her activity: making.[4] Since this instrumental way of thinking perceives everything from a means-ends relationship, every value is faced with degradation[5] and the world of *homo faber* is indeed embedded in a deep meaninglessness.

Homo faber could be redeemed from his/her situation of meaninglessness only through action and speech, the meaningful insertion of himself/herself into the realm of human affairs as an actor. In other words, the remedy for the unhappiness of *homo faber* comes from an activity outside itself that is action.

Action is the only component of *vita activa* which is directly based on the reciprocal relationship of people. Put it precisely, it is the only activity which does not need any intermediary of a thing or matter, since it corresponds to the human condition of plurality. Action can only be realized among the plurality of human beings, that is sheer human togetherness. We will have the chance to examine the close connection between action and human togetherness in the following part of the paper in a more detailed manner.

Among the three activities which constitute *vita activa*, action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality. Although all human activities carry an element of natality in itself, the new beginning inherent in birth can reveal itself only in action because the newcomer has the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting. This is because the newcomer represents a new beginning by virtue of his or her birth.

Consequently, we can argue that Arendt locates action into a superior position within the realm of *vita activa* with respect to labor and work by assigning a remarkable potentiality. Such privilege given to action is most apparent in her association of natality with action. Only with action, we have the chance to realize our human capacities in existential terms and

this kind of activity is truly political and has to be political in Arendt's thought. What is action is the political and *vice versa*.

In the following lines of the paper I aim to discuss the characteristics of action. With the help of this investigation, we will have the chance to see the link between action and the political much better. In order to establish this link, I aim to concentrate on power, freedom and human plurality as components of action, and so political in her political thought. Power, plurality and freedom come to the fore as essential characteristics of action in opposition to necessity and violence (which we will see when defining the social and social question) that characterize the realm of the social rather than the political.

Characteristics of Action

Action and Human Plurality

We have seen that human plurality is the human condition of action. Human plurality and human togetherness are features of action that make it possible because action is the revelation of the uniqueness and it can only make sense in the context of plurality and togetherness of people. Through acting, we reveal our «who», that is the quality which makes us distinct and unique in human plurality. In this context, «who» refers to a kind of authenticity and uniqueness peculiar to each individual, which makes him/her distinct from other people. Given this perspective, we may say that every human being was born to express himself/herself and he/she could do this only through action and speech among other people, that is to say; in the environment of human plurality.

In Arendt's outlook, human plurality is based on equality, and at the same time, distinctness of people. Given this presupposition with regard to human togetherness, she claims that, if people were not equal, they did not understand each other, and if people were not distinct, they did not need to express themselves to each other, they did not need speech and action in order to reveal themselves to others and they did not have any concern to be recognized and understood by other people.[6] So, what is revealed in word and deed, in action and speech is this distinctness and uniqueness. Furthermore, through speech and action, what is revealed is not only mere distinctness in the sense that individuals appear to each other, but, an appearance in public togetherness is created and this appearance is obviously different from merely bodily existence:

> «This appearance, as distinguished from merely bodily existence, rests on an initiative, but it is an initiative from which no human being can refrain and still be human».[7]

Neither labor nor work has such a constitutive and fundamental capacity with regard to the condition of being human. In other words, by acting, people enter into a process through which they actualize their humanly potentialities and create themselves as unique human beings which is, for Arendt, obviously the disclosure of the agent in speech and action.[8]

However, the revealed «who» hides himself/herself from the agent of the action, although action reveals him/her to other people.[9] This is perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of action depicted by Arendt, because it underlines the anonymity of the meaning of a particular action. Precisely, the disclosure of the identity and personality is strictly in need of other people, the interpretations and opinions of them, since in action, it is impossible and unimaginable that a person reveals his/her identity to himself/herself. Here, we observe that sheer human togetherness which is a specific quality and condition of action gains importance.

Without human togetherness, action loses its unique and specific meaning, because then it may be considered as merely a simple means to achieve a higher goal or a means to pursue an objective under the conditions that lacks human plurality. In this sense, in Arendt's perspective, action needs sheer human togetherness which means the togetherness of people that occurs when they are neither for, nor against others, but when they are just with others. Only in this sense, action can preserve its meaning and it can be away from an instrumental logic in politics and public life. We will see that human plurality as a characteristic of action is closely connected to power which emerges out of action itself. Power, in order to emerge needs sheer human togetherness and plurality.

Action and Power

In *The Human Condition*, it is stated that with the emergence of the public space, together with the realm of appearances, a power generating mechanism also developed. In this way, Arendt considers the public realm as a potentiality which cannot be reduced to physical locations, but, rather, as a potentiality that arises when people come together. In line with this argument, she conceives power as a potentiality which keeps the public realm alive, and maintains the potential space of appearances between actors and speakers. This means power preserves the public realm and keeps it active. From this angle, we can find affinities between power and action, in the sense that power always exists in the togetherness of people, since the generation of power depends on human togetherness. As mentioned before, power is also in need of sheer human togetherness and plurality in order to emerge.

Moreover, power cannot be kept in reserve for later times, but exists only in its actualization unlike the instruments of violence.[10] However, power is not actualized in any kind of human togetherness, since in order to be actualized it needs words and deeds, action and speech in their specific and unique senses. As she defends:

> «Power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds are not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities».[11]

For instance, in cases of both work and labor, there is human togetherness, but we cannot see this togetherness as the condition of the emer-

gence of power. Because in work, *homo faber* comes to the market only for selling his/her products, so he/she has an instrumental logic which is very different from the logic of action. In addition to this, in the case of labor, people live together but, it is an activity in which man is neither together with the world nor with other people. This is because in the activity of laboring, *animal laborans* is alone with his/her body in order to provide his/her survival. Then, we can argue that power is actualized when actors gather together just for political and public concerns. Looking from this angle, like action, power too has a vital significance for the preservation of public realm, i.e., realm of appearances. Therefore, we can talk about the actualization of power only under the conditions of political action and public deliberation. In this sense, we can claim that power is connected to the concept of the political since it is essential to action which is realized in public realm as opposed to the private and social affairs which are outside that particular realm. Human plurality and togetherness as a condition to power make action possible and action is only realized within the political realm which excludes the concerns of all sorts that are not related to public affairs. In the following sections of the essay, we will see that this enables Arendt to argue that social and poverty concerns cannot be solved within the realm of the political because they are not and cannot be connected to power and action in the way she depicts (without instrumentalization and even violence).

Action and Freedom

In order to focus on Arendt's conception of action with regard to freedom, it is essential to look into its closest connections with her conception of politics and plurality. As I have outlined above, action should always be considered together with the phenomenon of plurality. Within this framework, I will argue that there is a direct correlation between the arguments in *The Human Condition* and *What is Freedom?* Then, it becomes essential to focus upon both texts together for catching the links between action and freedom. In this context, *What is Freedom?* might be seen as a text supporting Arendt's arguments in *The Human Condition* with regard to the concept of freedom and its relation with action.

First, I will examine the relationship between freedom, action and natality. As I have said above, the potentiality of action has come to the scene when we were born, since a single birth on its own refers to a new beginning and the principle of beginning has caused further new beginnings, processes, actions. But, at the same time, with birth, the principle of freedom has also come to the scene, since every individual is born with the potentiality of freedom to start new beginnings, more exactly, processes.[12] In this manner, freedom and action are like the sides of a single coin (since their existence necessitates each other) because we cannot talk about action without freedom and *vice versa*.[13] Also, in order to act, one should liberate himself/ herself from the necessities of life which locate an obstacle in front of action. In this sense, for Arendt, necessity and freedom are opposite poles, since only under the conditions of freedom to act, we

become fully liberated from the necessity. Consequently, Arendt conceives every kind of necessity as in the opposite pole of action and freedom (This opposition between freedom and necessity becomes significant esp. in the distiction between the social and the political.) For instance, both labor and work depend on different kinds of necessities of fabrication and market, but on the contrary, action is the only activity which has gone beyond these necessities, so that we can talk only about freedom in the context of action. It may be argued that she juxtaposed these activities in a very strict manner: those of necessity (labor and work) and freedom (action). That is why she associates the social realm with necessity rather than the political because the social realm (concerns about poverty) deals with the biological necessities and basic needs so that they cannot be included in the political realm which is the realm of freedom.

On the other hand, emancipation from the necessities of life does not lead automatically to a state of freedom.[14] Because, such emancipation needs the existence of a public-political space where free people gather together in order to insert themselves to the realm of appearances with words and deeds. In this way, freedom can be realized merely in plurality, human togetherness of free people, since we can practice and understand freedom only and only in relationship with other people. Furthermore, freedom which is practiced in human plurality is strictly related with politics, because they necessitate each other. We may say that, for Arendt, just like action, freedom is also related to politics inherently, since freedom is one of the significant essentials of politics.[15] So, here again, we can observe the inherent connection between the features of action: human plurality, freedom and power as components of public political life. Freedom, like power, can only be realized under the conditions of sheer human togetherness and that is the realm of the political, the realm of appearances in Arendtian terminology.

According to Arendt, it is evident that the principle maintaining the political life is freedom which can be practiced only through action.[16] However, the tradition of Western philosophy has rendered this close connection between action and freedom obsolete, through conceiving action as a phenomenon which is fundamentally practiced in solitude: through one's dialogue with him-/herself. This emphasis on solitude caused the development of a conviction which grasps freedom as sovereignty. As a result, freedom was identified with the concept of sovereignty. But, for Arendt, such a perception was in contradiction with the human condition of plurality, because no one could be sovereign under the conditions of human plurality.[17] Put precisely, since sovereignty refers to an uncompromising self-sufficiency, it is impossible to realize such an identity in the web of human relationships because we, as human beings, are not able to dominate all the processes we have started and are not able to even foretell the consequences of our actions. We may argue that, indeed for Arendt, action and freedom can be associated with the term non-sovereignty rather than sovereignty. Such interpretation locates her political thought into a very interesting place in the tradition of modern political thought which

still conceives the notion of sovereignty as central for grasping the state, rights and public authority.

Consequently, we can argue that for Arendt, the individual who has lost his/her capacity to act, to begin new processes cannot be called a free person, since action and freedom are always conceived side by side. In addition to this, both action and freedom are conceived in human plurality, since both of them are realized in relationship with other people. For this reason, freedom in its relation with action is a phenomenon which has the capacity to open new gates to new unpredictabilities. In other words, both freedom and action have productive and constitutive capacities and essences to begin something new.

Action as the fundamental component of what is called political and public contains the characteristics that are in the opposite pole of the realm of the social and necessity. In this sense, as we have seen, action is associated with power, freedom and plurality. In Arendt's thought, those categories exclude the realm of the social and necessity. We will have the chance to see this conceptual opposition much better in the following part of the paper regarding the discussion on the social question. Therefore, what we will see is where there is action, power and freedom (which are the realm of the political); we cannot talk about concerns such as poverty that can be associated with the concept of the social.

Arendt on the Social Question

We find the discussion about the social question mainly in her text *On Revolution*. In the text, she examines the social question as part of her criticism of the French Revolution. However, I will argue that her treatment of the social question is not only peculiar to her interpretation and criticism of modern revolutions but is part of her understanding of the political in general. That is to say; her criticism of the French Revolutionaries in terms of their concern about solving the social question might be considered as a reflection of her political theory which portrays the public political activity in opposition to what the social is.

For Arendt, the problem of solving the «social question» that is, the liberation of men from suffering is one of the chief motivations of the French revolutionaries. It was a guiding principle which determined the course of the revolution. By the «social question», she means the aim of total liberation of men from suffering. Yet, she maintains that the «social question» must not be understood in terms of the lack of equality of opportunity, or the problem of social status.[18] Due to the attempts for solving the problem of poverty with political means, the French Revolution has been sent to its doom. In other words, the duality between the social and political is so strict in Arendt's theory that any revolution which aims to solve the "social question" with political means has to fail because the problem of finding and implementing remedies to the social demands of the people is the task of administration and it must be put into the hands of the experts.[19] For this reason, in Arendt's perception, the problem of

poverty is not a political problem that is to be solved by the processes of decision making and persuasion.

According to Arendt, the attempt to solve the «social question» with political means caused at the same time the public realm to become social in the process of the French Revolution. In this sense, public realm was overwhelmed by the needs which belonged to the sphere of household. Closely related to this, the distinction between the social and the political problems has been blurred, and the public realm has gained a new character; it has lost its "public" character in the strict sense. Namely, it has lost its peculiarity where freedom is realized. Accordingly, the entrance of social demands into the realm of politics brought forth the dominance of necessity over the public realm rather than freedom. Indeed this is in line with her insistence in *The Human Condition* concerning the distinction between public and private (household) realms: public realm was considered with the concept of freedom while the private realm was seen as the realm of necessity. Arendt conceives poverty as a category which locates men under the dictate of their bodies which means that it causes people to be directed by the call of necessity. In this way, in the French Revolution, it was under the rule of necessity that the multitude rushed the assistance of the revolution and sent it to its doom.[20]

Dealing with the social question with political means caused the invasion of the political realm by necessity. Thus, freedom disappeared in the course of the French Revolution. However, this was not the only reason that is criticized by Arendt. What was missing in the scene of the French Revolution was also power because instead of power, violence dominated the course of events. Here, what might be of our interest is the connection that is implied between the attempt of solving the social question and violence. From this angle, Arendt relates violence to the problem of social necessity: the aim of solving social problems led the French revolutionaries to a state of terror.[21] Specifically, trying to solve the "social question" with political means not only led to terror in the French Revolution, but also rendered the subsequent modern revolutions to their doom. Such association of violence with social necessity was inevitable, because as she argues, it was almost impossible to separate them when a revolution breaks out under the conditions of mass poverty.[22] About this matter, one might question Arendt's estimation that the attempt to solve the «social question» will inevitably lead to violence and terror. There is a certain ambiguity in assuming that the association between violence and the «social question» will always emerge, no matter under what conditions a revolution breaks. Here, one can infer that in Arendt's view, power as the component of action cannot be compatible with solving the social question and dealing with poverty. They are mutually exclusive in Arendt's outlook since violence (as a category that is truly incompatible with power) is associated with the social question.

Here, as one can easily observe Arendt works with rather sharp distinctions and juxtapositions when speaking about the social question. For her, the political and the public are associated with freedom, power and action whereas the social, and the social question of course, is associated

with necessity. That is to say: the political and the social question belong to distinct realms by their essence. In this sense, we can explicitly come to the conclusion that the social question is excluded from the realm of the political and this is not only peculiar to her treatment of the modern revolutions but also constitutes the very basis of her understanding of the public and what is political. This means that poverty is not a concern for Arendt in the realm of the political because we cannot solve the problem of poverty with political means, namely deliberation and discussion.

Concluding Remarks

So far we have seen that action constitutes the very basis of what we should understand from the political in Arendt's thought. The way she defines action enables her exclude any concern related to the social such as poverty from this very realm of the political. In this manner, action is the realm of freedom, power and plurality whereas what we see in the realm of the social is necessity.

We have also seen that Arendt explicitly argues for the solution of the problems of the social sort outside the realm of public deliberation and decision making. For her, these are the tasks of administration that some professionals should deal with. Politics is the activity that free citizens should perform and the content of this political activity is already confined to what is not related to necessity.

Here, in this paper, my goal was not to criticize the way she disconnects what is called the political from the social but rather, trying to see the inner structure of her way of reasoning when doing this. What I mean is I aimed to see in what manner she opposes to the questions of social concerns brought into the realm of the political. In this way, it is obvious that she works with sharp distinctions that allow her to reason that the realm of the political and the social are essentially distinct because they have different natures. However, I still do think that one can oppose, from an external point of view, to the fact that the social is detached from the political. This kind of criticism does not necessarily and particularly directed only to Arendt but to the thinkers who grounds their theories on the sharp distinction between the social and the political and exclude the social from the political in terms of treating the realm of the political as a place that should stay pure and uncontaminated.

Many contemporary political thinkers consider a connection between what is social and political in the sense that they bring the issues related to distribution and justice into the political deliberation process. Also, from my perspective, if political decisions have to affect all the people in a setting, there is always a question of distribution of goods and resources. Indeed it is not so easy to exclude the concerns of social sort from the political in the sense that where the borderline starts and ends is not so clear all the time. In this manner, one might also claim that (like feminists do), what is social and private (belong to the realm of necessity for Arendt) is political.

Given the diversity of the political and social problems of our times, an Arendtian way of seeing things - a strict separation of the social and the political – might not be so adequate. Nevertheless, the potentiality of her way of portraying action in terms of grasping political activity is still significant. She still reminds us the importance of political participation and action as a distinct and particular way of existence in the world. Politics is not an administrational activity that can be left to the hands of professionals but it is a way of realizing ourselves as citizens.

References

1 Here, I do not aim to define what the political is but rather, try to see what the characteristics and nature of such a conception in Arendt's theory are. In this sense, we can at least claim that the political is an essentially distinct realm with a specific nature.

2 *The Human Condition*, p. 7.

3 *The Human Condition*, p. 96.

4 *The Human Condition*, p. 154–155.

5 In this sense, we can say that such a mentality causes the substitution of making for action and creates an instrumentalist perception of politics. It will not be too assertive if we argue that this instrumental logic operates in the following manner: person, as a toolmaker, does violence to nature, or destroys it in order to finish his/her product, in politics person can do everything in order to achieve a political goal and every means can be legitimized in the light of a particular end.

6 *The Human Condition*, p. 176.

7 Ibid.

8 For Stewart Justman, the conception of «disclosure» has a specific meaning for Arendt since she does not use the term «expression» or «unmasking», but she definitely uses the term «disclosure». For him, people do not tend to unmask themselves. In other words, only I can disclose myself because I am the subject of the disclosure. But, in the act of unmasking I am the object inevitably. Furthermore, both unmasking and expression can be thought in terms of violence, since we can talk about violent «expression» and forcible «unmasking», but violent «disclosure» is uncertain. Moreover, Justman indicates that Arendt must have believed that the concept of «expression» threatens to reduce all action (in her view the supreme capacity of beings who are beginners by birth) to behaviour or acting out» (Justman, S. (1998) Hannah Arendt and the Idea of Disclosure, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. Vol. 8, Iss. 4, p. 415). In other words, Justman claims that; for Arendt, the concept of «expression» is far from referring to the uniqueness and specificity of action itself.

9 In this context, Arendt points out an analogy between the revealed «who» and the figure of «daimon» in Greek religion. «Daimon» is always with the person, looking from his/her shoulder but he/she could not see the «daimon», since «daimon» reveals himself/herself to other people that the person has got in contact. That is to say; the personal identity revealed through action is always related with the interpretation of other people, their opinions and reactions (*The Human Condition*, p. 179).

10 See Arendt's *On Violence* for the distinctions of «power», «violence» and «authority».

11 *The Human Condition*, p. 200.

12 M.P. Dentreves emphasizes the significance and peculiarity of Arendt's perception of freedom as to begin something new. For him, by freedom, Arendt does not mean simply the ability to choose among a set of possible alternatives

but, rather she means the capacity to start something unexpected with which all human beings are endowed with by virtue of birth (Dentreves, M.P. (1989) Freedom, Plurality and Solidarity: Hannah Arendt's Theory of Action, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. № 15(4), p. 318).

13 According to Richard King, political action was precisely freedom in its highest form, so action cannot be seen merely instrumental in achieving freedom. Nor was freedom a capacity to achieve some higher good (King, R. (1984) Endings and Beginnings: Politics in Arendt's Early Thought, *Political Theory*. Vol. 12, Iss. 3, p. 245).

14 Arendt, H. (1996) *Özgürlük Nedir?* (*What is Freedom?*). Gecmis ve Gelecek Arasinda; trans. by B.S. Şener. İstanbul: İletişim, 1996, pp. 201–202.

15 For Arendt, in our age, it has become impossible to talk about a natural connection between freedom and politics due to the experiences of totalitarianism and the tradition of political thought. For instance, totalitarianism has brought practices which altogether annihilated freedom and politics. Whereas the tradition of political thought has grasped freedom as being free from politics, since for political thinkers, freedom and politics cannot be conceived together. For instance, in the intellectual tradition of the 17th and the 18th centuries, freedom referred to the activities outside the realm of politics (*Özgürlük Nedir?*, p. 202–205).

16 *Özgürlük Nedir?*, p. 205.

17 *The Human Condition*, p. 234.

18 *On Revolution*, p. 66. In this context, one may ask whether there is a problem in her understanding of the «social question» because if the «social question» refers to the liberation of men from suffering during the French Revolution, is it possible to consider this ideal by ignoring the problem of social status or lack of equality of opportunity? In other words, we can argue that all these categories are the parts of the problem of the «social question», and for this reason, Arendt's understanding of the «social question» seems to be problematic and ambiguous.

19 *On Revolution*, p. 86. One should here be attentive to the critical remarks made on this view of Arendt. For instance, Joel Olson, criticizes Arendt's strict separation of social and political and asserts that it is a major weakness in her theory that she refuses to recognize that social concerns, when brought into the public realm, are amenable to political action. For Olson, her distinction between the social and the political essentializes the social concerns, leaving them for technology and administration to be solved. In distinction to Arendt's outlook, for him, the key to the «social *versus* political» dilemma lies in politicizing the social realm. That is to say, the solution can be found by providing a public sphere where the social concerns are addressed, without eliminating the distinction between the social and the political. See: Olson, J. (1997) The Revolutionary Spirit: Hannah Arendt and the Anarchists of the Spanish Civil War, *Polity*. Vol. 29, № 4, p. 463–474. In criticizing Arendt's perspective about the «social question», Ferenc Feher also points out a remark in Kant's philosophy for providing a public place within the republic to address the issue of happiness, the «social question». Feher touches on the two material principles Kant integrated into his «doctrine of virtue»: one's obligation to one's own perfection and one's obligation to the (morally approved) goals of others. For Feher, the second principle provided as much space for «happiness» (or the «social question») as possible within Kant's theory although he was not an ideologue of unlimited wealth. In other words, the introduction of the second principle, which was the principle of association, provided a public space within the republic to address the issue of happiness, the «social question» (Feher, F. (1989) Practical Reason in the Revolution: Kant's Dialogue With the French Revolution, *Social Research*. Vol. 56, № 1, p. 184). Feher, in another article, criticizes Arendt's perception about the domination of the social during the process of

the French Revolution. For him, the main weakness of her innovative view of the French Revolution is that she failed to understand the negative character of the social strategies during the revolution. This means that for Feher, the revolutionaries chose political terror as an answer to the social problems, as a negative strategy. In line with this, he argues that «If the Jacobins stand accused before a revolutionary posterity, it is not because of their merging the political with the social but because, as captives to the "power of circumstances", they chose political terror as the only answer to social problems. They rejected the idea of a rapid industrialization because the British urban scene of the industrial revolution was abhorrent to them. They also rejected what they called, in the wake of Rousseau, an 'artificial civilization'» (Feher, F. (1987) Freedom and the 'Social Question' (Hannah Arendt's Theory of the French Revolution), *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, № 12, p. 19).

20 *On Revolution*, p. 54.

21 In this context, the following statement by a Parisian carpenter in 1795 which Albert Soboul tells us advocates that terror is related to the social demands in the French Revolution: «There were blood in the era of Robespierre, but, we had bread to eat» (Soboul, A. (1989) *Fransız Devriminin Kısa Tarihi*; trans.by İ. Yarkın. İstanbul: İnter, p. 88).

22 *On Revolution*, p. 108.

WHY HANNAH ARENDT'S IDEAS ON TOTALITARIANISM ARE HETERODOX?

Zenonas Norkus*

Abstract

The paper discusses the impact and present relevance of H. Arendt's work on totalitarianism for the field of the political science known as «Communism Studies» or «Soviet Studies». Competing with the theory of modernization (since the 1960s) and historical institutionalism (since the 1980s), theory of totalitarianism dominated these fields in the 1950s, and was partly rehabilitated in the 1990s after the demise of communism. However, H. Arendt's ideas on totalitarianism were never accepted without important reservations by the champions of the totalitarianism theory like Carl F. Friedrich, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Juan J. Linz, and others. H. Arendt's work on totalitarianism is unorthodox by its antipositivist methodology: her account of totalitarianism contains not only scientific, but also poetic truth on totalitarianism like that in the great antitotalitarian fiction works (by Georg Orwell, Arthur Koestler, Vasily Grossman and others). H. Arendt deviates from the presently prevailing view of Nazist totalitarianism as the reaction against and imitation of Communist totalitarianism. According to H. Arendt's genealogy, totalitarianism in Western Europe would remain real possibility even given the preemption or early demise of Communism in Russia, being rooted in the pathologies of the advanced Western modernity – anti-Semitism, imperialism and mass society. Among other deviations from orthodoxy, her separation of Stalinism from Leninism is most conspicuous, and can be explained by H. Arendt's Leftist backgrounds and influences from the 1930s.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, communism, totalitarianism, positivism and antipositivism, political science and fictional literature, alternative history.

In our days, Hannah Arendt is considered as one of the most important Western philosophers of the 20th century. However, although philosophically educated, she was very reluctant to define herself as a philosopher. As late as in 1964, with her major philosophical work *Human Condition* already published, in the interview by Günther Gaus she protested her description as a philosopher:

> «I do not belong to the circle of philosophers. My profession, if one can even speak of it at all, is political theory. I neither feel like a

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philosopher, nor do I believe that I have been accepted in the circle of philosophers, as you so kindly suppose» (Arendt, 1964/1994: 1).

Before being appreciated as an important philosopher, H. Arendt came to international fame and prominence as a political theorist with her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (*OT*), published for the first time. It remains her most widely read and influential work.

H. Arendt was neither inventor of the word «totalitarianism», nor the first who described Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia as twins. This idea was part of common currency in the liberal intellectual circles already before World War II, especially in 1939–1941, as Nazist Germany and Stalinist Russia maintained a strategic partnership, established by the infamous Molotov–Ribbentrop pact in 1939 (see Gleason 1995). Shortly after 1945, as time of the censorship and self-censorship that was politically correct under conditions of Anti-Hitlerite alliance, came to the end, a flood of publications appeared that asserted basic similarity of the Nazist and Communist regimes. H.Arendt's was pioneering by designing a theory of totalitarianism as a new form of govermment and making this theory part of the body of knowledge called «political studies» or «political science». This contribution secures for Arendt distinctive place not only in the history of philosophy, but also in that of political science.

OT is her main contribution to the field known as «political theory». Presently, «political theory» is conceived as «normative» or «philosophical» part of political studies. H. Arendt's *OT* does not correspond exactly to this idea of «political theory», as she provides both normative (philosophical), comparative sociological and historical analysis of totalitarianism. The goal of my paper is to evaluate Arendt's work on totalitarianism as contribution to the branch of political science known as «comparative politics».

I will proceed in the following way. In the first section I will provide a kind of historical outline of this field, locating theory of totalitarianism as one of the theoretical approaches in the comparative communism studies. What is specific about the conceptualization and explanation of communism as totalitarianism? What alternative conceptualizations can there be? In the second section my question will be: what is specific about conceptualization and explanation of totalitarianism in H. Arendt's work on totalitarianism, as compared with other theoretical contributions on totalitarianism? This section is central, because it is here where I will try to identify the «heterodoxies» in H. Arendt's thinking about totalitarianism – its differences from what are more established or influential views. In the concluding third section, I will ask how useful Arendt's heterodoxies can be for current discussions on totalitarianism.

1. Theory of Totalitarianism and its Rivals in Comparative Politics

Although first communist regime was established in 1917, «prior to 1945 the subject of communist government was largely shunned by social scientists and allowed to remain almost exclusively within the domains of

journalism and historiography» (Janos, 1991: 81–82). The main reason was that during the first two decades after 1917, the number of cases (N) seemed to be 1. Communist state (Soviet Union) looked like as something without precedent, but it was not clear a case of what it is. Comparative politics is looking after generalizations. None of them is possible to establish until we find some other cases sharing crucial simillarities with the case in focus. As Soviet Union advanced to the world power after World War II, and Cold War has began, the academic industry known as «area studies» was established at the U.S. research universities for comparative studies on Communism (Szanton, 2004). As Arendt‘s *OT* was published, it was received and read most intensely in the «area studies»[1] where it still has the status of classical work representing one of the three ways of «etic» thinking about Communism.

I am using the word «etic» here in the sense of anthropological theory, where it means the decription of a form of life from the perspective of the external observer, who declines to accept the «emic» self-description of the participants in this form of life. In our case, the «emic» description of Communism is that by Communist believers themselves. The differences between three Non-Communist descriptions of Communism derive from the differences in the politics of comparison –which are cases are selected for comparison to reveal the truth about Communism that remains closed for Communists themselves. Politics of comparison is about selection of mirror. Three mirrors of Communism, used in the comparative politics, are Nazist Germany, modern Western countries themselves in their early modernizing phase, and traditional patrimonialist and neo-patrimonialist countries.

Totalitarianism theory uses first mirror in thinking about communism. It highlights the similarities between Communist countries and Nazist Germany. From this standpoint, most important features of Communism are those that communist countries share with Nazist Germany: one party dictatorship, mass terror, concentration camps, aggressive foreign policy and so on. As it foregrounds the similarities in the ideologies of Nazist and Communist regimes, theory of totalitarianism was perfect ideological weapon for the Western world in the 1950s, as tensions of Cold war were at the peak.

However, as these tensions lessened, another etic way of thinking about communism came to prominence, called «modernization» or «convergence» theory. From this point of view, most important fact about Communism is that countries where local communists came to power by their own resources (Russia, China) were economically and socially underdeveloped. They were struck in the modernization crisises and state breakdowns caused by the military defeats in war against their more advanced neighbours. According to modernization theory, Communism is just one of many ways of modernization. Modernization means transition from rural, agricultural, authoritarian, religious forms of social life to urban, industrial, democratic, liberal, secular society. The peculiarity of Communist «turbomodernization» is massive use of violence to break traditional institutions and to speed up social transformation, achieving changes in the

economy in few years, while the pioneers of modernization – Western countries needed for similar changes long centuries. Classics of this way of thinking about communism are works by American historical sociologist Barrington Moore Jr. (Moore, 1950; 1954; 1966; see also Mann, 2005). B. Moore acknowledges totalitarian features of Stalinist Russia, but considers them as transitional and discovers totalitarian syndrom in many premodern polities (e. g. ancient Sparta or Geneva under Jean Calvin's rule in the 16th century; see Moore, 1958).

Admitting huge human cost of Communist «turbomodernization», proponents of the view of Communism as way into modernity are eager to draw attention that revolutionary violence has played in the breakthroughs to modernity in the pioneering countries themselves, starting with religious wars (described by Marxist historians as «bourgeois revolution») in England in the 17th century, continuing through French revolution in the 18th century with its Jacobin terror and revolutionary, then Napoleonic wars. Even United States, this empire of freedom and justice have their record of terror and civil violence, including the genocide and deportations of Indian populations, black slavery, persecutions against British loyalists while and after victorious Independence war, and the convulsions of Civil war in 1861–1865. The authors seeing in Communism nothing more but totalitarian terror are too forgetful about the past of their own countries. Early modern history of the «old good democracies» with their record of revolutionary violence provides the key to explain recent history and nearest future of Communist countries. Modernization theorists expected gradual opening, liberalization and democratization of the Communist countries, leading to the convergence with liberal democracy in the West. They see their vision of Communism finally vindicated by the relatively peaceful transition to liberal democracies in the most of former Communist countries after 1989.

However, these hopes and expectations seemed to be disappointed in the 1970s, during the so-called «stagnation time» in former USSR. At this time, the third approach in thinking about Communism emerged, called most frequently «historical institutionalism» that currently prevails in the retrospective historical sociological work on Communism (Jowitt, 1983; 1992; Hanson, 1997; Stark and Bruszt, 1998). This approach derives its distinction from the politics of comparison that suggests searching the key for understanding late Communism via its comparison with those countries in the «Third world», where modernization was unsuccessful or broke down. Behind the facade of the «modern» institutions one finds here the social reality consisting of patron-client networks and all-pervasive corruption. Historical institutionalists insisted that this type of social organization, called «neopatrimonialist», was characteristic for the late Communist countries too. They assert that Communist violent «turbomodernization» led to the impasse, as institutions created during the early phase of the regime petrified, giving rise to «Communist neotraditionalism», heralding the convergence with the Third world countries as imminent future for communist countries, that happily did not materialize for some former Communist countries after 1989–1991.

As for the early phase of Communism, they prefer to theorize it through lens of Max Weber's famous typology of domination. They classify Leninism as particular form of «charismatic domination» that was not foreseen by M. Weber himself. Ken Jowitt describes this form as «charismatic impersonalism» (Jowitt, 1983) that combines charismatic (direction of economy in «combat» style and «planned heroism») and rational-legal elements (bureaucratic government, bureaucratically directed mass party) into a relatively coherent amalgam that negates the dichotomy between «utopia» and «development» (Hanson, 1997: 19). However, like standard forms of charismatic domination, this amalgam is highly unstable, its traditionalization and routinization leading to the «neopatrimonialist» corruption, decay, and collapse.

Paradoxically, it was at the same time (the 1970s and the 1980s), when theory of totalitarianism came to new prominence, this time in the Communist countries themselves. As the dissident movement emerged here, it used the theory of totalitarianism as its deadly effective weapon. During the terminal phase of Communism in the late 1980s, description of Communism as totalitarianism became part of the common sense knowledge, transforming itself from one of the etic theories used by Western social scientists into the emic theory of the Communist societies themselves. Everybody, including some secretaries for ideology of Communist parties finally came to believe he/she is living in a «totalitarian society» – a society that is a twin to that Nazis created in Germany.

Where is the paradox? Obviously, if a society is totalitarian, no political opposition is possible in that society, and no public statements that it is «totalitarian» can be made. If such statements can be made, it means that this society is no more totalitarian. There are authors who claimed that contemporary Western societies are «totalitarian» too (e. g. Herbert Marcuse in the 1960s). This statement is false because and as much one can freely make such a statement in public. The same logic applies to the late Communist time, when the theory of totalitarianism became increasingly involved in the performative contradiction. It falsified itself by destroying its own referent at the moment when it became part of this object – its self-description, emic knowledge or part of common sense.

I will not pursue the discussion of the etic theories of Communism further. What I have said is the minimum that is necessary to locate H. Arendt's contribution (in the next section) to them and to assess its present relevance (in the closing section).

2. Arendt as Heterodox Classic of Totalitarianism Theory

As I have already pointed out in the introduction to my paper, Arendt was not the first author who classified together Soviet Communism and Nazism as two cases of «totalitarianism». However, before Arendt's *OT*, it was usual to assimilate them to the broader class of mainly premodern political systems, variously called «despoties», «tyrannies», «dictatorships» etc. As distinguishing features of such political systems the lack of the civil and political rights and of the «rule of law» was considered. The

«rule of law» is secured by the constitutional division of legislative, executive, and judicial power. «Asian despoties» were usual examples of totalitarian political systems. Another famous Cold war book – Karl R. Popper's *Open Society and Its Enemies* that was published just few years (in 1945) before Arendt's OT exemplifies this pre-Arendtian way of thinking about totalitarianism by describing ancient Greek Sparta as «totalitarian state». If one thinks about totalitarianism in this way, one is bound to describe Nazism in Germany and Stalinism in Russia as relapses from the modern, open society into the closed tribal society, caused by «strains of modern life», as K. Popper did. Famously, he argued that Plato was intellectual father of totalitarianism, by outlining in his *Republic* first project of totalitarian state and even making practical steps to materialize it.

Arendt made the distinctive and original contribution to the theorizing about totalitarianism by insisting that is totalitarianism new and unprecedented form of government, different and even incomparable with ancient and not so ancient «tyrannies», «despotisms», «dictatorships». It is possible only under modern social conditions, summarily described by H. Arendt as emergence of «mass society». She famously defines totalitarianism as «a form of government whose essence is terror and whose principle of action is the logicality of ideological thinking» (Arendt, 1951/1979: 474). Ideological thinking and totalitarian terror are about how to abolish human spontaneity and plurality by making all human beings dispensable instances of the law of movement epitomized by the totalitarian movement itself. This movement aspires to make its ideological principle true by coming to global power and transforming all society according to principles, experimentally developed in concentration camps.

> «What totalitarian ideologies therefore aim at is not the transformation of society, but the transformation of human nature itself. The concentration camps are the laboratories of human nature itself» (Arendt, 1951/1979: 458).

According to Arendt, camps are the «guiding social ideal of total domination in general», and «these camps are true central institution of totalitarian organizational power» (Arendt, 1951/1979: 438).

The camps serve for the experiment of transforming human personality into something like Pavlov‘s dogs that were trained to eat not when they were hungry but when a bell rang. So ultimately totalitarianism is not about how to degrade human beings to mere animals, but to do something worse – to make them perverted animals:

> «For Pavlov's dog, which, as we know, was trained to eat not when it was when it was hungry but when a bell rang, was a perverted animal» (Arendt, 1951/1979: 438).

I would like to maintain that these observations contain the most deep Arendt's insight about totalitarianism, although at other places in *OT* she falls back from this insight to the weaker statement that totalitarianism is just about how to reduce human beings to mere animals. However, in

this case it would be simply «evil». Totalitarianism is not simply «evil», but «radical evil» because it is about to do something worse: to make out of human beings «perverted animals». This is to do with human beings the same evil that human beings are doing with animals by training them to perform in circus. For animals, circuses are what hell and concentration camps are for humans, because circus animals are perverted animals. Under totalitarianism, human beings undergo the same treatment that animals receive in circuses.

Arendt designs three-stage model of the logic of total domination in totalitarian hell (circus). Firstly, the juridical person is killed in human beings. In the arbitrary but systematic way, groups of individuals are stripped of all juridical rights. In totalitarian concentration camps, inmates are without any rights, differently from the inmates in the «normal» prisons. Secondly, the moral person is murdered in human beings, corrupting human solidarity and undermining moral conscience.

> «Totalitarian terror achieved its most terrible triumph when it succeeded in cutting the moral person off from the individualist escape and in making the decisions of conscience absolutely questionable and equivocal» (Arendt, 1951/1979: 452).

Third and crucial phase is achieved as any vestige of human individuality, unpredictability, and spontaneity is destroyed by making human beings as human beings superfluous. It is here where ultimate goal of totalitarianism is achieved:

> «Nothing then remains but ghastly marionettes with human faces, which all react with perfect reliability even when going to their own death, and which do nothing but react» (Arendt, 1951/1979: 455).

This description applies both to perpetrators and victims of totalitarian terror. Hitler, Stalin and all true Nazis and Communists are nothing but perverted animals, «ghastly marionettes with human faces» whom the amazed witnesses could observe during the famous Moscow processes in 1936–1938, as members from inner circle of Soviet leadership publicly confessed patently false and absurd charges, displaying the same behavior that one can enjoy observing tricks that perverted animals do in circus.

H. Arendt was successful at persuading the establishment in the political science departments at U. S. universities that totalitarianism is indeed a new form of goverment, to be distinguished both from premodern autocracies and modern non-democratic (authoritarian) governments. Most important contributions to the theory of totalitarianism in the political science after Arendt's seminal *OT* include the book by Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (1956/1965) and that by Juan J. Linz *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, published for the first time in 1975. Together with H. Arendt's *OT* they constitute the core of the theoretical literature on totalitarianism. They share with H. Arendt's *OT* the assumption of the novelty of the 20th century totalitarian regimes. However, they differ from H.Arendt's work on

number of aspects, embodying what I call «orthodoxy» in totalitarianism studies, and Arendt's *OT* representing heterodox, albeit seminal book on totalitarianism.[2]

Friedrich and Brzezinski provide the list of the six distinctive features of the totalitarian form of goverment. Taken together, they define an «ideal type» of totalitarianism. This list includes:

1) «an elaborate ideology consisting of an official body of doctrine covering all vital aspects of human existence to which everyone living in that society is supposed to adhere, at least passively; this ideology is characteristically focused and projected toward a perfect final state of mankind – that is to say, it contains a chiliastic claim, based upon a radical rejection of the existing society with conquest of the world for the new one» (Friedrich, Brzezinski, 1956/1965: 22);

2) a single mass party, hierarchically organized and either completely intertwined, or superior to governmental bureaucracy. Such a party is led by single dictator and consists of up to 10% total population, including a hard core of «true believers»;

3) «a system of terror, whether physical or psychic» (Friedrich, Brzezinski, 1956/1965: 22), effected by secret policy or party-directed social pressure, and directed not only against real enemies of regime but also again more or less arbitrarily selected groups and categories of population;

4) «a technologically conditioned, near-complete monopoly of control, in the hands of the party and of the government, of all means of effective mass communication, such as press, radio, and motion pictures;

5) a similarly technologically conditioned, near-complete monopoly of the effective use of all weapons of armed combat;

6) a central control and direction of the entire economy through the bureaucratic coordination of formerly independent corporate entities, typically including most other associations and group activities» (Friedrich, Brzezinski, 1956/1965: 22).

Juan Linz's list of the features clustering into a «totalitarian syndrome» is much shorter and includes (Linz, 2000/2003: 25): (1) a monistic (also not necessary monolithic) center of power; (2) an exclusive, autonome and more or less intellectually developed ideology, which is point of identification for the ruling group, a leader or a party; (3) participation and active mobilization of masses. In Linz's conceptualization, totalitarian regime is just an extreme case of authoritarian regimes, sharing with them the same logical space that is constituted by three dimensions as listed above. While totalitarian regimes are monistic, ideological and mobilizational, there can be several varieties of authoritarian regimes depending on which combinations of values from these three dimensions they display. Authoritarian regimes tolerate limited pluralism and usually work to depoliticize and demobilize masses (e. g military bureaucratic regimes in Latin America), although some of them (e. g. Fascist Italy under Mussolini or Baasist Irak under Saddam Hussein and Syria under Hafez Assad) may attempt to mobilize through mass «state party» and its satellite «front organizations».

Orthodox or mainstream theorists conceive totalitarianism as some specific configuration of state institutions, working according some specific rules that they try to identify and describe. For orthodox theory, totalitarianism is just another one, albeit new form politics, because they conceive politics as activities related to state government. Such conception of totalitarianism is displayed by the very title of the important contribution by Brzezinski (1956), that most probably is polemically directed against Arendt's view of totalitarianism. Brzezinski's book bears the title "*The Permanent Purge: Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism*. For H. Arendt, totalitarianism in power means the end of politics, conceived as sharing words and deeds by differing equals. For Z. Brzezinski, it is a different kind of politics.

Before coming to power, totalitarianism emerges as a movement. Differently from mainstream theorists, who focus on totalitarianism as a form of government or a political regime, the bulk of Arendt's work is dedicated to analysis of totalitarian movement and its origins, that are conceived as «elements» (distantly comparable with those in chemistry), that under specific conditions can «crystallize» into a totalitarian movement. When Arendt makes structural observations on totalitarianism, they are not about a totalitarian state or regime, but about the totalitarian movement. Totalitarian movements model themselves after the example set by secret societies. She describes their structure as consisting out of concentric spheres, beginning with the outer circle of «front» organizations, continuing with «outer» and «inner» party, and containing the dictator with his narrow clique around at its center (or on the crest of the vortex of totalitarian terror).

Members of totalitarian movements belong to different spheres or circles of totalitarian movement depending on how much they know about what is really going on. Arendt considers the efforts to identify an institutional structure of the totalitarian regime that emerges after totalitarianism comes to power as futile, because totalitarianism degrades state institutions to mere facade. With a totalitarian movement in power, the only really effective institution is the secret police that is instrumental for the realization of the very essence of the totalitarian government – to keep ideologically justified mass murder going, with ever new categories of population (including the members of the totalitarian movement itself) arbitrarily selected for extermination. Totalitarianism in Arendt's depiction is just «a political hurricane of frantic, irrational, nihilistic motion, shapeless and incapable of anything but destruction» (Canovan, 2000: 37), including the destruction of the state itself. Until totalitarianism lasts, everything remains in flux.

Denying presence of stable institutional structure both in the totalitarian movement and the totalitarian government, Arendt shares with orthodoxy the emphasis on ideology as the feature distinguishing totalitarianism from premodern autocracies and modern authoritarian regimes. Only totalitarian regimes can be described as «ideocracies», ideologies being the most important driving force of the policy of totalitarian regime. From this feature Arendt derives the rigidity and antiutilitarian features

displayed by the policies of the totalitarian leaders, her most frequently used example being Nazist Holocaust during WWII when Jewish populations were exterminated despite all negative consequences of such policies for the conduct of war: annihilation of labour force and distraction of manpower resources. Totalitarian movements in power use state power to make their fictitious ideological worlds true, by reshaping reality with correspondence with totalitarian lies, and proving that everything is possible or that everything can be destroyed.

As the proof that everything is possible cannot succeed without bringing the whole world under their power, totalitarian movements in power can exist only expanding by means of military agression and engaging into deadly mutual conflicts, each fighting to make true its own ideological definition of reality. As only big countries can provide sufficient resources for such policy of ruthless expansion, Arendt can find only two real historical instances of totalitarianism in power – Nazist Germany between 1938 and 1945, and Stalinist Russia between 1930 and 1953, with a pause for 1941–1945. Curiously, Arendt assumes that for the time when Stalinist Russia was engaged into the battle against Nazism, totalitarian rule was in some mysterous way suspended, and masses of perverted animals, «ghastly marionettes with human faces» populating Russian plains, were allowed to convert to normal humanity.

Orthodoxy in totalitarianism studies avoids considering elites and leaders of totalitarian regimes as automatons, driven by the «coercive force of logicality», springing from «our fear of contradicting ourselves» (Arendt, 1951/1979: 472–473). Orthodoxy defends more mundane views about the driving motives of totalitarian leaders and elites. It pinpoints that they did not hesitate compromise opportunistically on the ideological principles when necessary. Instead of fighting unbendingly to remake reality to fit totalitarian propaganda lies, totalitarian regimes dropped old lies and circulated new ones according to circumstances and pragmatic needs. Totalitarian leaders had not simply «value-rationally» carried out their ideology «like robots programmed for destruction» (Canovan, 1992: 62), but acted displaying considerable strategic rationality.

Most famous episode of such a compromise was, of course, the strategic parnership between Stalin and Hitler in 1939–1941, with all readjustements in ideology and propaganda of Communist International that this partnership involved. Curiously, one does not find in Arendt's work the discussion of this episode, that prompted many leftist intellectuals to free themselves from the spell of Communism. Under totalitarianism, ideology was much more important than in the most cases of authoritarian and autocratic rulership, but «coercive force of logicality» was far from being the only force, driving policies of totalitarian regimes. Admitting expansionism and militarism of totalitarian regimes, orthodox theories do not consider military aggression as irresistible inner drive, leading totalitarianism to fight the entire world and end in military defeat and destruction, as Arendt seems to assume.

The disagreements of orthodoxy with Arendt themselves are motivated most strongly by the concern of orthodoxy to expand the reference

class of the concept of totalitarianism. Arendt's use of this concept impels one to consider totalitarianism as relatively shortly lasting «dark holes» in the history. Therefore, she did not describe as «totalitarian» Soviet Union and its satellites in Central and Eastern Europe after 1953, Communist China under Mao. Following H. Arendt's use of totalitarianism concept, one cannot describe as totalitarian lesser Communist states the foreign policies of which were rather isolationist and autarkic than expansive and agressive (e. g. Albania in 1960–1990, Campuchea in 1975–1979, Cuba, North Korea). The concern to expand the reference class of totalitarianism concept explains the decision of J. Linz to drop the terror from the list of the defining features of totalitarianism, and that of C.J. Friedrich and Z. Brzezinski to attenuate the reference to terror by (weakly) disjunction of «physical or psychic» terror. Of course, if one conceives as «psychic terror» the stream of state-controlled mass media propaganda inundating populations of Communist countries, terror under Communists never ceased until Gorbachev's «glasnost». But if one sticks to Arendtian idea of «totalitarian terror» as directed not against real opponents of regime, but against arbitrarily selected categories of population (including parts of ruling elite), than one should follow her usage not to apply this concept to USSR after Stalin.

However, these differences between Arendt's ideas on totalitarianism and orthodoxy are relatively minor. They are differences merely in focus and emphasis, and are secondary with respect to the differences that can be described as primary, and are differences not of degree, but of kind. I can detect three such essential differences or Arendt's major heterodoxies. First of them will be discussed in the remainder of this section, and remaining two will be spared for concluding third section.

Perhaps most important among them is the difference in methodology. Mainstream work on totalitarianism conceives itself as positive science, proceeding from the assumption that only a kind of truth about reality is scientific truth, and commits itself to the postulate of value neutrality. H. Arendt proceeds from the assumption that scientific arguments are not sole carriers of cognitive content. From the orthodox positivistic point of view, totalitarianism is on a par with other possible subjects of positive political analysis that includes standard procedures of description, explanation, and prediction. These procedures should be separated carefully from evaluation, as differences in the fundamental values cannot be decided by empirical or philosophical argument. Arendt declines to accept this standard positivist credo. In Arendt's view, totalitarianism is so novel and unprecedented that standard instruments are simply inadequate to understand it, and demarcation line between positive research, normative evaluation, and poetic representation (fiction) should break down. Most important things about totalitarianism can be conveyed only by means of poetic or metaphoric truth. My thesis is that Arendt's work on totalitarianism makes not only grand political theory, but also great poetry.

As a matter of fact, political theorists and scholars in general were not the only and the most influential writers on totalitarianism. Deepest insights about totalitarianism were brought up by fiction writers, including

those working in the literary genre known as anti-utopia or dystopia. As I stated in the first section that late Communism – no matter whether it was still totalitarian or not – was destroyed by totalitarianism theory, I did not mean that there were the treatises of political scientists that delivered this deadly blow. Poetic or fictional truth about totalitarianism revealed in widely read fiction books killed totalitarianism or what remained after it. Most important among them include *The New Brave World* by Aldous Huxley, *We* by Leonid Zamyatin, *Darkness at Noon* by Arthur Koestler, and of course *Ninteenth Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm* by Georg Orwell. Very important items in this list are the novels by Russian writer Vasily Grossman (1905–1964) *Life and Fate* and *Forever Flowing*. Although V. Grossman seems never having read H. Arendt, his books contain the same message about totalitarianism as Arendt's works spread: totalitarianism's basic institution is concentration camp that is about to expand, by swallowing and encompassing all society and the whole world.

Some societies might be «court societies», others «industrial societies», and there may be here «consumption society», but totalitarian society is «concentration camp society». Reading Arendt's *OT* through the lenses of Hayden White's theory of the historical imagination (White, 1973), one cannot fail to detect that Arendt's historical imagination shares with the poetic imagination of Orwell in *Ninteenth Eighty-Four* the same leading metaphor. This is the metaphor (synecdoche) of a concentration camp that provides the key to totalitarianism for both. G. Orwell book shows us in detail what it means to live in the society that is run as one huge concentration camp, and what it means to live the life that is worse than animal's life: to live like a perverted animal in totalitarian circus (or «reality show») under the gaze of Big Brother.

Arendt's antipositivistic methodology implicit in *OT* includes the assumption that totalitarianism as an object of knowledge is unique in being not fully accessible to purely scholarly understanding. The effort to understand (and destroy) totalitarianism needs the support of poetical imagination. Therefore, straddling the line that separates scholarly study from poetic imagination is not detrimental, but *conditio sine qua non* to come to terms with this particular object. Because Arendt's treatise on totalitarianism proceeds from this assumption, it makes her book qualitatively different (and much broadly read) from orthodox work on totalitarianism. As a matter of common knowledge, in her reply to Eric Voegelin, who reviewed *OT*, she confessed frankly that she did not consider value neutrality opportune and binding writing about totalitarianism.

> «I parted quite consciously with the tradition of *sine ire et studio* of whose greatness I was fully aware, and to me this was a methodological necessity closely connected with my particular subject matter» (Arendt, 1953a/1994: 403).

My thesis is that the same «methodological necessity» drives Arendt even further – to break the barriers separating fiction and scholarly work. Arendt's work is unorthodox in belonging to both – the poetic (fictional) and scholarly – traditions of writing about totalitarianism. Of course,

she was writing at the time, when modernism with its strict oppositions between literature and philosophy, fact and fiction, literature and historiography was at its height. Without the risks of compromising her work in the eyes of the many all-to-important others, she could not disclose her most important deviation from prevailing orthodoxy in full. It was postmodernism that brought the theoretical deconstruction of and practical transgressions against these oppositions. Arendt was no postmodernist. However, in her writing on totalitarianism, she practised what later postmodernists preach. So OT can be described as first postmodernist – albeit only in form, and not in content – work in political theory.

Reading of Arendt's *OT* as not only a great scholarly treatise, but also a great poetry book, as a blend of scholarly hypothesis and poetic truth helps to understand and to explain some peculiarities of her work that have baffled those who have read OT as a conventional history book or purely scholarly treatise. Invoking this «methodological necessity», Arendt in her description of concentration camps takes recourse to theological language, dividing them «into three types corresponding to three Western conceptions of a life after death: Hades, Purgatory, and Hell» (Arendt, 1953a/1994: 445). Arendt is notorious for using as her sources fictional works like tales by Rudyard Kipling or Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. She describes J. Conrad's book as «the most illuminating work on actual race experience in Africa» (Arendt, 1951/1979: 185), and finds in its hero Kurtz the prefiguration of Nazi mentality (Tsao, 2002: 590).

One can find in Arendt's book many places that read like factual falsities, if measured by standards of conventional historiography. Just a couple of examples. Somewhere Arendt writes about Stalinist terror:

> «It is, for example, typical that if some prisoners in a marching column fall down and lie dying on the roadside, the soldier in charge will arrest any people he happens to find along the way and force them into column to maintain his quota» (Arendt, 1953b/1994: 301).

Even if such things did happen, the characteristic of such things as «typical» strains the imagination a bit. However, this description succeeds beautifully in conveying the message what it means to live under conditions of arbitrary terror. In another place, Arendt attributes to Soviet propaganda the lie that Moscow subway is the only one in the world.

> «The assertion that the Moscow subway is the only one in the world is a lie only as long as the Bolsheviks have not the power to destroy all the others. In other words, the method of infallible prediction, more than any other totalitarian propaganda device, betrays its ultimate goal of world conquest, since only in world completely under his control could the totalitarian ruler possibly realize all his lies and make true all his prophecies» (Arendt, 1951/1979: 350).

As a matter of fact, one can find in Soviet propaganda only the statement that Moscow subway was *the best* in the world. After the conquest of Berlin and Budapest, Red Army did not attempt to destroy local subways,

and it is difficult to believe that Soviets postponed the destruction in these cities until the final victory over «world imperialism and capitalism», when all subways were scheduled to be destroyed (except the subway in Moscow). However, who may doubt that text quoted above provides very deep insight into totalitarian propaganda? Characteristically, preparing new editions of *OT*, Arendt did not bother much to update her evidential basis or make corrections of factual mistakes like the referred above. This is perfectly legitimate attitude towards the work that is conceived by its author as something more than a conventional piece of scholarly work.

The poetic side in Arendt's *OT* transpires very strongly also in the method of her political theory, described by her commentators as «fragmentary historiographical storytelling» (see Benhabib, 1990; Luban, 1983; Disch, 1993; Young-Bruehl, 1977). She should have been inspired to use this method by Walther's Benjamin's theory of «fragmentary historiography», recommended by him as a means to break the spell of the retrospective determinism inherent in the traditional storytelling. In his review of Arendt's *OT*, Eric Voegelin has described Arendt's method as one of traditional philosophy of history, because the arrangement of the material in her book was «roughly chronological» (Voegelin, 1953: 69). In her answer, Arendt rejects this description on the grounds that mode of presentation used both by traditional historiography and philosophy of history amounted to the display of the necessity in the chain of the events represented by the story (Arendt, 1953a/1994). In her opinion, such way of representation is tantamount to the justification of the phenomenon represented. This is completely unacceptable with respect to totalitarianism that deserves only destruction.

H. Arendt suggests that incoherences in her account of totalitarianism are deliberate stylistic devices used to neutralize the effects of the standard storytelling.

> «The book, therefore, does not really deal with the 'origins' of totalitarianism – as its title unfortunately claims – but gives a historical account of the elements which crystallized into totalitarianism; this account is followed by an analysis of the elemental structure of totalitarian movements and domination itself. The elementary structure of totalitarianism is the hidden structure of the book, while its more apparent unity is provided by certain fundamental concepts which run like red threads through the whole» (Arendt, 1953a/1994: 403).

3. Arendt's Relevance for Current Work on the History of Totalitarianism

Referring to «unruly organization» (Tsao, 2002: 581) of H. Arendt's narrative about totalitarianism, critics mean the lacking connection between the stories told in the first («Antisemitism») and the second («Imperialism») parts of the book on the one hand and that in the third («Totalitarianism») on the other one. Antisemitism was an essential part in the Nazist ideology, and Jews were the first among other population

categories scheduled for extermination. The tide of antisemitism rose in the USSR during last years of Stalin's rule. If Stalin had lived longer, Jews could be the next target for deportations. However, in this role they were already number 5 or 6 after the Crimea Tatars, North Caucasus and Baltic peoples that were targeted by the former waves of Stalinist terror. While Nazism is antisemitic by definition or essentially, antisemitism cannot be considered as one of the elements out of which Communist totalitarianism has crystallized. So Arendt's story about the rise of the modern antisemitism can be helpful to understand Nazi totalitarianism, but not Communist totalitarianism or totalitarianism in general.

The difficulties concerning the relation between part three and part two are even greater. The second part contains the account of the crisis of national state, rise of imperialism and race thinking. However, the bulk of this material is about British imperialism, Boer racism and South Africa. Only chapter 8 about continental imperialism, pan-movements (Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism), tribal nationalism, and chapter 9 about stateless persons have obvious connection to H. Arendt's discussion of totalitarianism in the third part. However, the relation between Pan-Slavism and Communist totalitarianism is very tenous, and H.Arendt's insights about racism are irrelevant for understanding Communist terror.

So one can find in Arendt's book the account of the constitutive «elements» of Nazist totalitarianism, but one cannot but miss a similar contribution for its Communist (Bolshevik) counterpart. One can explain this lack of balance either by her postmodernist proclivities *avant le lettre*, or pragmatically – by circumstances under which *OT* was produced. As a matter of fact, the book that we know as *OT* was conceived as a book about imperialism. Only after having done the bulk of the work, H. Arendt changed its subject (see Tsao, 2002). The masses of text that were written for different purpose, were included to fill out the new outline, and W. Benjamins ideas about non-conventional fragmentary historiography were very helpful to legitimate such *tour de force*.

However, this is still not the full story, because H. Arendt herself admitted the existence of the gap in the book – the lack of historical and conceptual analysis of the origins of the Communist totalitarianism. In the year when *OT* was published (1951), she submitted to the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation a research proposal for the book that should fill out this gap. The working title of this book was *Totalitarian Elements in Marxism,* and later was changed to *Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought*. H. Arendt never completed the book. As she embarked on her Marx book project, she became convinced that the work of Marx was just culmination and the end of the entire Western philosophical tradition, gradually converging with K.R. Popper who traced origins of totalitarianism back to Plato. Her insights gained in the work on Marx book project were seminal for *The Human Condition* (1958), *Between Past and Future* (1961) and *On Revolution* (1963). All these books incorporate parts of her manuscripts that were initially produced for her book on Karl Marx and seeds of totalitarianism in his work.

While H. Arendt used her new insights and findings from the book project on K. Marx preparing new editions of *OT*, she never reworked initial text in a fundamental way. The most important change that was prompted by her research on Marx, was the addition of the chapter *Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government*, which was first published separately in 1953, and then starting with the 1955 German edition of *OT* was added to subsequent editions. This addition and other revisions did not amount to change in focus: Nazist form of totalitarianism remained in foreground. This is what I consider the second out of two remaining major heterodoxies of Arendt's work, as compared with the mainstream or orthodox work on totalitarianism. Because Communist totalitarianism survived its Nazist twin that became increasingly more and more distant history, it became paradigmatic and primary case of totalitarianism in the post-Arendtian research on totalitarianism, overshadowing its Nazist counterpart. Arendt's account, that was grounded in experiences of Nazist totalitarianism and focused on it, remained exceptional, heterodox – and exactly for this reason – increasingly original.

The third and the last Arendt's major heterodoxies can be found in Arendt's account of the Communist version of totalitarianism. H. Arendt draws the line between non-totalitarian or pre-totalitarian Communism on the one hand and totalitarian Communism, that she idiosyncratically calls «Bolshevism», on the other one. Historically, «Bolsheviks» were the faction in Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) that emerged in 1903, when party split over the question how it should be organized during its Second Congress, held in Brussels and London in August 1903. «Bolsheviks» were a faction, led by Vladimir Lenin who promoted organizational model that was shaped after the example set by secret societies and medieval orders. Lenin advocated instituting a system of centralized control known as the «democratic centralist» model, leaving sympathizers outside the party (as part of «front organization»), and limiting party membership to a small core of professional revolutionaries. This new model of party organization provided Lenin's faction with «organizational weapon» that was its crucial advantage in the power struggles after the breakdown of Russian empire in 1917, leading to the consolidation of Bolshevik dictatorship after the victory in civil war. «Communists» were the name that Russian «Bolsheviks» have assumed in 1919.

In Arendt's account, «Bolsheviks» are Stalinist faction inside Communist party itself. She attributes to this faction the perversion of the revolutionary dictatorship established by V. Lenin. According to Arendt's account, not true Leninist Communists, but Stalinist Bolsheviks subjected Russia to the vortex of totalitarian terror, starting in 1930 with rich peasants («kulaks») as its first target. In Germany, totalitarian regime emerged out of totalitarian movement that was politically successful under conditions of the social dislocations caused by the defeat in World War I and economic crisis that ravaged world economy in 1929–1933. These dislocations transformed «class society» into a «mass society» – crowds of lonely individuals susceptible to totalitarian propaganda and manipulations. According to H. Arendt, Lenin worked to build a «class society»

in postrevolutionary Russia. The regime that was about to emerge in the postrevolutionary Russia was «bureaucratic rule».

> «If the October Revolution had been permitted to follow the lines prescribed by Marx and Lenin, which was not the case, it would probably have resulted in bureaucratic rule» (Arendt, 2002: 306–307).

It was Josif Stalin who derailed Russia from this path of the development, achieving mass atomization by means of terror from above (see Arendt, 1951/1979: 318–323). This account deviates from the orthodox narrative about the rise of totalitarianism in Russia. How can one explain Arendt's pro-Soviet (sic!) and even pro-Leninist sympathies?

H. Arendt's unorthodox conception of Lenin's role can be explained most readily by her Leftist backgrounds and influences from the 1930s. The circles where Arendt got her first political experiences were Leftist, including many non-Stalinist Communists who considered *October revolution* in 1917 as one of the most important events in the history of the emancipation of humankind. H. Arendt's second husband, one time member of German Communist Party, Heinrich Blücher was part of this milieu. During her own active participation in politics in the 1930s and the 1940s, Arendt herself was leftist Zionist, sharing positive evaluation of *October revolution*. Even in her later years, as she has already positioned herself as a leading political theorist with original contribution to the strand of political theory known as «civic republicanism», that is rather close to (neo)conservatism, she described in her book *On Revolution* (Arendt, 1963) the creation of Soviets as positive achievement of Russian revolution, considering them as institutions of participatory democracy.

While H. Arendt granted that Soviets were subverted in this role by Communist domination already in Lenin's time, she never detracted from her opinion that Communist government under Lenin was bureaucratic dictatorship, but not totalitarian rule. In current research on totalitarianism, the prevailing trend is to consider Leninist party of professional revolutionaries as a germ of totalitarianism, and to consider the regime established by Lenin himself as already totalitarian (see e. g. Arato, 2002; Kohn, 2002; Lefort, 2002).

> «The true creator of totalitarianism is Lenin. … It was Lenin himself who created the institution, without which totalitarianism is inconceivable, the totalitarian party» (Castoriadis, 1997: 65).

According to Adam Michnik, «there is no non-totalitarian communism. Either it is totalitarian or it ceases to be communism» (Michnik, 1985: 47).

All or almost all theorists that contributed to the theory of totalitarianism were liberal rightists or conservatives. Left liberals or social-democrats usually reject theory of totalitarianism, revealing preference for seeing Communism through lenses of modernization theory. Leftist influences may have blinded H. Arendt to totalitarian features that the regime established by victorious Leninists has displayed already in the

1920s. However, I would also argue that Leftist backgrounds or leanings provide Arendt's view of totalitarianism with heuristic power to deliver insights that are relevant for current discussions among the exponents of the theory of totalitarianism themselves.

Before the demise of Communism, main topic in these discussions was the very content of the concept of totalitarianism. The definition of the concept mattered, because it was crucial for the classification of particular countries as totalitarian with ensuing implications for practical (foreign) policy of Western countries. Was the Soviet Union under Nikita Khruschev or Leonid Brezhnev (still) totalitarian? What is about Hungary under Janos Kadar in the 1970s? The opinions on these questions were widely different. Invoking his particular definition of totalitarianism, Juan Linz together with Alfred Stepan argued that among all Communist countries, Poland never was totalitarian, because Polish Communists never succeeded in their attempts to control Catholic Church or reduce its influence (Linz, Stepan, 1996: 255-261). Jeane Kirkpatrick, who was United States Ambassador to the United Nations under President Ronald Reagan, argued famously that while U. S. can be on friendly relations with «authoritarian» regimes (e. g. Chile under Augusto Pinochet), this cannot be the case for «totalitarian» regimes, even if the former indulged in violations of human rights on comparable scale (Kirkpatrick, 1982).

After the demise of Communism, another topic advanced to the center in the discussions on totalitarianism that was raised during the so-called *Historikerstreit* (*historian's quarrel*) in West Germany and Austria that took place in these countries in 1986–1987 (see Baldwin, 1990; Evans, 1989; Kershaw, 1989). This was an intellectual and political controversy in West Germany about the way the *Holocaust* should be interpreted in history. During this discussion, a number of German historians, most prominent among them Ernst Nolte[3], argued that the «race murder» of the Nazi death camps was a defensive reaction to the «class murder» of the Stalinist system of GULAG. If there were no Bolshevik totalitarianism and GULAG, the Nazis could not come to power in Germany, no World War II and no Auschwitz would happen (see Augstein et al., 1987/1993).

Nazist totalitarianism was just a dependent and reactive form with respect to Bolshevik totalitarianism. German people turned to Nazism seeking defense from the horrors of Bolshevism. Nazis, and before them, Fascists in Italy just took over methods of organization and political struggle invented by Bolsheviks, and used them against Bolsheviks themselves. Bolshevik inventions that were borrowed by Nazis include concentration camps that along with the secret police are considered by Arendt as central establishments of totalitarianism.

> «It is a striking deficiency in the literature about nationalsocialism, that it did not know or did not want to acknowledge to what extent all those things that were done later by Nationalsocialists (with the only exception of the technical procedure of the using gas for killing) were already described in the vast literature in the early twenties: mass deportations and shootings, tortures, death camps, extermination of the whole groups according to ob-

jective criteria, public demands to annihilate millions of people without any guilt but considered as 'hostile'» (Nolte, 1986).

I would like to argue that Arendt's Nazism-centered analysis of the origins of totalitarianism is uniquely relevant for this discussion that cannot be considered as closed. Are E. Nolte and other German historians right in asserting that without the «Bolshevik menace» Nazism had no chances in Germany? Remarkably, Arendt does not even ask about the impact that Communism and Bolshevism in Russia had on the rise of Nazist totalitarian movement in Germany. One can consider this as another blind spot in her analysis related to her leftist leanings. However, this silence about the interactions and mutual influences that one totalitarian movement could exert on another can be considered also as symptomatic for her belief that emergence of Nazi regime with all its lethal consequences was independent from the fate of Russian revolution.

My thesis is that H. Arendt can be considered as paragon for the account of the rise of totalitarianism in Germany that is an alternative to Nolte's theory asserting that it was simply an effect and copy of Communist totalitarianism. Of course, Arendt denied that totalitarianism was inevitable. If her interpreters are right, the point of her fragmentary historiographical storytelling was to destroy the spells of retrospective historical determinism. The real question is, however, where is the latest point or the latest crossroad in the course events at which the totalitarian catastrophe still could be prevented. Obviously enough, there would be no «short» 20th century described by many historians as the century of totalitarianism, if World War I had been prevented. August 1914 was the moment at which the gate was opened for all disasters that have descended upon humankind in the 20th century.

What about later times? What about 1917? «If we remove Vladimir Lenin from the picture, what is left of the leading insurrectionary party?» – asks Georgi M. Derluguian from Northwestern University (Evanston, Illinois), in his thought-provoking essay *Alternative Past, Future Alternatives?*, published in Autumn 2004 issue of *Slavic Review*, where he discusses fateful constellations of events in Russian history in the 20th century (Derluguian, 2004: 539). His answer is that «Lenin in 1917 gives us the rarest example of a personality changing the course of history» (Derluguian, 2004: 539). Remove Lenin (say, by sending Terminator to the past by means of time travel machine), then there would be no October coup, no Brest-Litovsk peace, and Germany would be defeated in 1918 some months earlier than it was defeated as a matter of fact. However, one has no reason to assume that peace treatise with Germany would be made on conditions that would be less harsh than those of Versaille peace treatise in 1919, with all its potential for provoking rightist radicalism and revanchism in Germany.

At the same time, one can doubt that Constituent assembly that was elected in on November 12th, 1917 and assembled for its first meeting on January 5th, 1918 to be infamously dissolved by Bolsheviks early in the morning next day, was able to establish liberal democracy in Russia.

Proponents of the liberal parliamentary Russia «would have difficulty explaining how Russia could have become exception to the contemporary authoritarian trends and how its putative liberal government could have dealt with the worker, peasant, and national revolts while keeping at bay the militaristic 'saviours of the Motherland'» (Derluguian, 2004: 541). Russian state in its 1914 or even larger borders (after the victory against Germany) barely could be restored without harsh suppression of the numerous nationalities on its borders (including the fledgling national Lithuanian state), such suppression leading to civil war and establishment of the military authoritarian regime reminiscent of that established by Admiral Horty in Hungary or Francisco Franco in Spain.

First democratically legitimated government of Russia that most probably would be built by «socialist revolutionary party» («Esers»), who had won majority of seats, most probably would be ousted out of the power by the military coup like those that are usual in Latin America or have terminated budding democratic regimes in the Eastern European countries in 1923–1938 (Bulgaria being the first, Poland the second and Lithuania the third in the series of countries where authoritarian coups took place).

The establishment of the authoritarian military or fascist regime was even more probable in the case of victory of White movement in the Civil war that was unleashed by Bolshevik coup. The restoration of the «united and undivisible Russia was on the top in the program of all White generals – Aleksandr Kolchak, Nikolai Iudenich and especially Anton Denikin, who was the closest to the military victory over Communists. Denikin's forces fought Ukrainian nationalists just as fiercely as Communists, and they were on the brink of the military conflict with Polish army even before defeating Bolsheviks. So «one must wonder what might have been the consequences of attempted conquests of former imperial borderlands, possibly including the renewed pursuit of pan-Slavism or the Eurasianist project» (Derluguian, 2004: 541). Although Pan-Slavism as pre-totalitarian ideology was irrelevant for the rise of Communist totalitarianism, one can appreciate the insight of Arendt when she included Pan-Slavic ideas into her discussion of the origins of totalitarianism. As a matter of fact, Pan-Slavism and Eurasianism were alternative ideologies for Russian-based totalitarian movement that could take the place of Communism if Bolsheviks were crushed in the civil war.

> «A fascist Russia would not have necessarily welcomed Nazi and Japanese expansionism. Geopolitical rivalry takes precedence over ideology at the level of world-historical causality» (Derluguian, 2004: 541).

Because of its harsh and humiliating conditions, the Versaille peace treatise made the resurgence of German revanchism barely avoidable. World political alliances most probably would take the shape not much different from the lines they took in World War II, including the alliance between U.S. and fascist Russia against Germany and Japan. If fascist or Pan-Slavically totalitarian Russia would not manage to stand up German onslaught, the most probable outcome would be «a dichotomous Nazi-

American cold war secured by the nuclear deterrent» (Derluguian, 2004: 542). If one would like to know what the life in the Nazi empire after Hitler's death and then probable «thaw» (similar to that that took place in Communist world after J. Stalin) would be like, one can barely find a better model than the regime of apartheid established by the Boers in South Africa. Deeply symbolically, the demise of this regime was coincident in time with the breakdown of the Communism in Eastern Europe. Over again, it is South Africa that Arendt refers to as a place where «lying under anybody's nose were many of the elements which gathered together could create a totalitarian government on the basis of racism» (Arendt, 1951/1979: 221).

To conclude, most important contribution that Arendt's *OT* made to current discussions on totalitarianism among historians is her insight that totalitarianism in the 20th century is perfectly imaginable even with Lenin and Bolsheviks «removed from the picture». If we accept Arendt's thesis that the danger of totalitarianism is immanent in the social conditions of «mass society», we cannot avoid the conclusion that it remains a real hazard even after both totalitarianisms of the 20th century are removed from the picture into the dustbin of history. However, I would like to spare the discussion of this conclusion for some other occasion in hope that it will never turn out to be true.

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1 H. Arend's work was discussed intensely in the conference on totalitarianism, held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in March 1953, that attracted many specialists in budding area studies. See: *Totalitarianism*. Proceedings of a Conference held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, March 1953. New York : Grosset and Dunlap, 1964.

2 In the late 1970s and early 1980s this literature was expanded by contributions of the group of French authors, some of them Ex-Communists. The news about the terror that Khmer Rouge have perpetrated in Campuchea in 1975–1979 together with Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Archipelag GULAG* was an immediate cause for this new popularity of the theory of totalitarianism. However, this literature did not attract much interest in the comparative politics. Most important contributions of the «French school» in the theorizing on totalitarianism include Besançon, 1976/1978; 1981; Castoriadis, 1981; Lefort, 1986.

3 This group includes also Michael Stürmer, Andreas Hillgruber, Joachim Fest, Klaus Hildebrand, Rainer Zitelmann.

DEMOCRATIZING POLAND
WITH HANNAH ARENDT

Katarzyna Stokłosa*

Abstract

In communist Poland, uprisings against the ruling regime broke out time and again. For this reason, Poland was regarded as a «focus of revolution» within the Eastern bloc. Striving for freedom and independence was always a marked interest in the country, which was fuelled by the endeavours of many Polish intellectuals who kept in touch with Western Europe and the United States. Mainly in the 1960s, intellectual life in Poland formed a barrier of resistance against communism. Already before the political upheaval in the year 1989, the works of Western philosophers were read and received in select circles of Polish intellectuals. Neither was Hannah Arendt an unknown person. Despite problems with censorship, three of her books, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (*A Report on the Banality of Evil*), *The Life of the Mind*, and *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, were published in 1988. After the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in 1989 Hannah Arendt's works ceased being something forbidden and mysterious.

In this paper, Hannah Arendt's literary reception in Poland before and after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc will be analyzed and evaluated. Afterwards the question will be discussed, how much influence Hannah Arendt's ideas had on the consolidation of democracy in Poland.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, communism and postcommunism, intellectual resistance, Poland, democracy.

During the twentieth century Central Eastern Europe was impacted by both types of totalitarian regimes, i.e. National Socialism and Communism. In the reappraisal of these both regimes, the works of Hannah Arendt, predominantly *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* are appreciated in numerous circles primarily located in Poland and Hungary. However, even before the political upheaval in 1989 Hannah Arendt was not an unknown personality in the former Eastern Bloc. In the following presentation the reception of Hannah Arendt in Poland before and after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc will be portrayed and analysed.

Interest in Hannah Arendt in Poland began in the nineteen-seventies and increased in the eighties. This was the period of resistance against the Communist regime, in which role models were

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sought for the achievement of freedom in their own land. The struggle for freedom is a Polish tradition. This aspect was detected in the works of Hannah Arendt and used as a role model for the reestablishment of freedom. Despite a publication ban and censorship of Polish philosophers, even within Poland, total rule was still studied. Beginning in the mid-nineteen-seventies documents, reports and analysis of the use of power and the nature of the totalitarian system in Poland were published in the independent press. Alongside with Hannah Arendt's, works by George Orwell, Karl Mannheim, Hans Kelsen, Isaiah Berlin, Friedrich von Hayek, Zbigniew Brzeziński, Richard Conquest and Raymond Aron also appeared in Polish.

Hannah Arendt's works were discussed in the intellectual circles of the *Solidarność* movement. Her literature was also referred to often in opposition circles, such as *ResPublica*, *Arka* and *Przegląd Polityczny*. Despite censorship problems, Cracow publishing house *Znak* published *Eichmann in Jerusalem* in 1988 and Warsaw underground publishers released *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. At the famous Polish universities in Warsaw, Cracow and Danzig illegal seminars and debates took place, in which the theories and thoughts of Hannah Arendt were analysed. During Jerzy Jedlicki's private seminars between 1976 and 1980 his students became acquainted with Hannah Arendt's literature. Włodzimierz Heller observed that since the mid-nineteen-eighties Hannah Arendt's thoughts have served as a cure for proceedings in the political sphere.[1]

There was no reaction to Hannah Arendt's essay *Totalitarian Imperialism: Reflections on the Hungarian Revolution* in Poland, although she also mentioned revolutionary activity in Poland in 1956.[2] During the nineteen-eighties intellectual life in Poland formed a bastion of resistance and contributed to the intellectual strengthening of those who profited from it in some form. It spread a feeling of moral recovery. In the nineteen-eighties the Poles showed great bravery in resisting Communist ideology as well as the institutions that served it and in accepting the repression this caused.[3]

In 1989 Poland achieved her goal by distancing herself from the Eastern bloc and adopting western values. All important works by Western political scientists that appeared after the Second World War were published in Polish. Even Hannah Arendt's works were no longer forbidden and secretive.[4] The uncensored version of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* had already been published in 1989 and was published again in 1993, in a Poland, which was already free. At the end of the nineteen-eighties and the beginning of the nineties the translation of the following works by Hannah Arendt were published: *The Life of the Mind* (1989), *On Revolution* (1991), *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (1994), *On Violence* (1998) and *The Human Condition* (2000). In 1990 Nina Gładziuk published an analysis of the thought of Hannah Arendt.[5] The Polish sociologist, Paweł Śpiewak, observed that after 1989 the difference between the western and Polish thinking quickly disappeared.[6]

Polish correspondents became involved with the *Hannah Arendt Newsletter*. It is a discussion and information forum, which was established in the mid-nineteen-nineties under the influence of Hannah Arendt's ideas.[7]

Polish academics often refer to Hannah Arendt in their writings. Józef Tischner, a philosopher and clergyman, used Hannah Arendt's thesis on the totalitarian exploitation of the relationship between people in his article *Die totalitäre Herausforderung. Judentum, Christentum und der Totalitarismus des 20. Jahrhunderts (The totalitarian challenge: Judaism, Christianity and the totalitarianism of the twentieth century)*. In doing so he slightly modified it. He agreed that totalitarianism exploited people's behaviours. However, the Stalinist form of totalitarianism became a tool for a certain direction: «The human becomes a fighting tool and is more like a canon or a revolver than the hammer and sickle»[8].

Paweł Śpiewak used the thoughts of Hannah Arendt in his description of the character of totalitarianism.[9] The book by Cezary Wodziński *Światłocienie zła* (*Chiarosauro of Evil*) characterised the presence of Hannah Arendt in Poland's intellectual life. One important work that is concerned with Hannah Arendt is a book by Włodzimierz Heller. In it he attempts to describe the problems of political pluralism as a property of the political sphere, which returns to Hannah Arendt. In search of sources on the pluralist perception of politics he refers to Arendt's concept of the human condition and the „political being“ as well as to two activities, which according to Arendt and her life, determine what is political. These include the power of judgement and the power of political action.[10] In conclusion Heller describes his own images of the Polish political sphere today, which reflect the topicality and vitality of the Hannah Arendt project. As the first proof for the effectiveness of Hannah Arendt's thought in Poland he lists the establishment of a great number of non-governmental organisations. The incorporation of a large number of citizen groups into the framework of non-governmental organisations was characteristic of the first years of democratic Poland after the 1989 regime change. Foundations, unions, political organisations and informal groups form the third sector of the democratic system after national and local government. They are the «expression of civil freedom and express civil needs and emotions»[11] Włodzimierz Heller regards the second proof of the consolidation of democracy in Poland after 1989 as the situation of the national minorities. They are increasingly granted more rights and take part in Poland's political life. However, since Heller's evaluation the situation of the national minorities in Poland has worsened. In the Fourth Republic of the ruling party «Law and Justice» (PiS) attempts have been made to reduce the rights of the biggest minority in Poland, i. e., the German minority.[12]

In the anthology, *Totalitaryzm a zachodnia tradycja* (*Totalitarianism and the Western Tradition*), which was published in 2006, contributors from the fields of history, philosophy, sociology and politics repeatedly return to Hannah Arendt. Ryszard Legutko agrees with Hannah Arendt that the totalitarian soul is a lonely one.[13] Miłowit Kuniński in his contribution presents the most important points of Hannah Arendt's totalitarian

theory, namely that the development of the capitalist economy goes hand in hand with the extension of the social sphere, which transforms the private sphere into the public sphere. Open society and caring about the common welfare become increasingly weaker. Mass society without a traditional class structure becomes increasingly isolated in the sphere of politics and increasingly lonely. Such societies become progressively more susceptible to totalitarian ideologies.[14]

A few authors have used the writings of Hannah Arendt in their analyses of the Solidarność movement. Marek Latoszek, a sociologist, considered which of the models of revolution that Hannah Arendt spoke of, the French or the American, most closely resembled the one carried out by Solidarność.[15]

Polish scientists also referred to Hannah Arendt's work when analyzing the state of war from December 13th, 1981. In celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the introduction of a state of war, Polish quarterly, *Przegląd Polityczny* (Political Review) surveyed well-known Polish historians, sociologists, philosophers, and political scientists as to whether Poland was a totalitarian state as of December 13th, 1981. Daniel Grinberg, a historian, analyzed Poland under Edward Gierek and declared the following:

> «Against the background of a democratic, modern Western Europe, Gierek's Poland represents a relatively mild form of a state that is not entirely sovereign, ruled in an authoritarian manner, but, despite all that, still has many of the trappings of Democracy».[16]

He asserted that Poland had little to do with the classical «totalitarian syndrome» and Hannah Arendt's analysis at that time, since elements of pluralism were present in almost all areas of life.

Marek Kornat, likewise a historian, responds first to the totalitarianism concept in his article. He asserts that not every discrepancy with democracy can automatically be classified as totalitarianism. The author argues for Hannah Arendt's theory of totalitarianism as it was presented in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. According to her, the Third Reich only had a totalitarian character in the years from 1938 till 1945 and the Soviet Union possessed one during the Stalinist times from 1929 till 1956. Before 1938, there was a totalitarian movement and totalitarian leadership (Adolf Hitler), but still not a totalitarian state. Kornat emphasized this differentiation in Arendt's work. According to this idea, he asserts that there was a turning away from totalitarianism in the time between the end of Stalinism and the appearance of *Solidarność*, which was very meaningful to the People's Republic of Poland. This process put Polish society, not party reformers in action. When Hannah Arendt wrote *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, she knew that her theories would have to be supplemented in view of the experiences of the year 1956. In further paragraphs, Kornat discusses the question of what the state of war introduced on December 13th, 1981 means according to the perspective of engagement with totalitarianism. The historian came to the conclusion that whenever the characteristics of a totalitarian system are actually a totalitarian mass

movement – as Hannah Arendt asserted – after the introduction of a state of war, there were no such movements in Poland. That is the best proof of the thesis that Poland was already a post-totalitarian state at that time.[17]

Ireneusz Krzemiński, a sociologist, Paweł Machcewicz, a historian, and Zdzisław Najder, a literature historian also all refer to Hannah Arendt in their analyses of the state of war in Poland. Machcewicz emphasizes the fact that Arendt revised her thesis that totalitarianism eliminates the possibility of the development of inner opposition and that it cannot be eliminated through inner strength after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.[18]

Aleksander Smolar, publicist and political scientist agrees with Hannah Arendt at length in his contribution. He begins by discussing the concept of totalitarianism. He states that while this concept is presently of great importance in Poland and other Central Eastern European countries, it has lost topicality in the West. Smolar refers to intensive discussions that have taken place among scientists and publicists in Western Europe throughout the fifties. The totalitarian paradigm prevailed until the middle of the nineteen-fifties. Here, Smolar mentions the work of Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski: *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* as well as *The Origins of Totalitarianism* by Hannah Arendt. According to his contribution, Hannah Arendt's model of totalitarianism remains true, even to this day due to deep philosophical reflection and literary strength. The cooling of ideology, abolition of mass terror, and the stabilization of the ruling class led to totalitarianism's self-destruction. This had led Hannah Arendt to announce the end of Communist totalitarianism in the nineteen sixties. These changes had led to the collapse of totalitarianism as a system of government in the years 1989–1991. Smolar agrees with Hannah Arendt that totalitarianism would decline along with the end of deep belief and terror. After the totalitarian system had lost the revolutionary triad – movement, ideology, and terror – it had no chance of survival.[19]

Popular Polish historian of ideas, Adrzej Walicki utilized Hannah Arendt's ideas to prove his thesis, which claimed that Poland was no longer a totalitarian state after 1956. According to Walicki the first signs of a thaw had already appeared in Poland by 1954, and by 1956 Gomulka's Poland had lost its totalitarian characteristics altogether. Walicki responds first to the concept of totalitarianism. He declares that the concept of totalitarianism's confinement to use as a simple tool of the anti-Communist right during the Cold War period was a huge mistake. There were definitely representatives of a leftist philosophy among the great thinkers who engaged in the fight against totalitarianism including the following: radicals (George Orwell, Hannah Arendt), liberals (Karl Popper) or the ex-Communist left (Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Stephen Spender, and Richard Wright). Walicki emphasized an important characteristic of totalitarianism: the ability to rob people of not only outer but also inner freedom. This causes individuals to lose their deepest identity, the right to be themselves.[20] Here, Walicki makes a connection with Hannah Arendt, who proved that «totalitarianism is never content to rule by external means … totalitarianism has discovered a means of dominating and terrorizing human beings from within»[21]. The model of Totalitarianism de-

scribed by Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, according to Walicki, proved too static and ideological since they did not take into account the consequences of its unplanned evolution. This model did not clarify the process of changes that began in the U.S.S.R. through Stalinization. Here, Walicki refers again to Hannah Arendt, who, in the preface to the second edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, states that the Soviet Union began an authentic, although not a clear-cut process of destroying totalitarianism after Stalin's death and therefore, one could no longer label the Soviet Union of the sixties «totalitarian» in the most narrow meaning of the word.[22] In the end Walicki emphasizes one more time that Poland was no longer totalitarian after 1956. The most important changes to the system were not the division of power and thus political democratization, but rather the limitation of the amount of power, and thus liberalization. In place of a system of totalitarian control over all areas of life, political authoritarianism took over, which gave the individual in society considerable freedoms in the private sphere as well as in cultural and intellectual life.[23]

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2 Cf.: Arendt, H. *Die Ungarische Revolution und der totalitäre Imperialismus*. In: ibid., *In der Gegenwart. Übungen im politischen Denken* II, 73–126.

3 Cf.: Legutko, R. Die Intellektuellen und der Kommunismus. In: Śpiewak, *Anti-Totalitarismus*, 235–264, here: 262.

4 *Świat ten wart jest troski*. In: Przegląd Polityczny, 55 (2002), 34–43, here: 34.

5 Cf.: Gładziuk, N. (1991) *Cóż po Grekach? Archetyp polis w twórczości Hannah Arendt*. Warsaw.

6 Śpiewak, P. (2003) *Polnische Erfahrungen mit dem Totalitarismus*. In: ibid. (ed.) *Anti-Totalitarismus. Eine polnische Debatte*. Frankfurt a. M.: 15–67, here: 25.

7 Cf.: Leszczyńska, K. (2002) *Hannah Arendt Newsletter*. In: Przegląd Polityczny. Vol. 55. P. 214–215.

8 Tischner, J. *Die totalitäre Herausforderung. Judentum, Christentum und der Totalitarismus des 20. Jahrhunderts*. In: Śpiewak, *Anti-Totalitarismus*, p. 129–151, here: 1–33. Self transalation from: «Der Mensch wird zum Kampfwerkzeug und gleicht eher einer Kanone oder einem Revolver als Hammel und Sichel».

9 Cf.: Śpiewak, Die Zähmung der Finsternis. In: ibid. (ed.) *Anti-Totalitarismus*, p. 152–175.

10 Cf.: Heller, op. cit., 14.

11 Ibid, p. 170. Self translation from: «Ausdruck der bürgerlichen Freiheit, drücken bürgerliche Bedürfnisse und Emotionen aus».

12 Cf.: Gazeta Wyborcza. 2006. 9–10.9, № 1.

13 Cf.: Legutko, R. (2006) Totalitaryzm i dusza ludzka [Totalitarianism and the human soul]. In: M. Kuniński (ed.) *Totalitaryzm a zachodnia tradycja*, Cracow, 46–56.

14 Cf.: Kuniński, M. (2006) Totalitaryzm w ujęciu Hanny Arendt [Totalitarianism in the understanding of Hannah Arendt]. In: ibid. (ed.) Totalitaryzm, 116–142.

15 Cf.: Latoszek, M. (2005) «Solidarność»: ruch społeczny, rewolucja czy powstanie? [«Solidarność»: gesellschaftliche Bewegung, Revolution oder Aufstand]. In: Fr. Adamski, u. a., *«Solidarność» w imieniu narodu i obywateli* [*«Solidarność» im Namen der Nation und der Bürger*], Kraków, p. 240–282, 251.

[16] Przegląd Polityczny, 79/80 (2006), 173.
[17] Cf.: ibid, 175–180.
[18] Cf.: ibid, 187.
[19] Cf.: ibid, 194–197.
[20] Cf.: ibid, 209–210.
[21] Arendt, H. (1976) *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York, 325.
[22] Cf.: ibid, XXXV–XXXVII.
[23] Przegląd Polityczny, 79/80 (2006), 214–215.

ARENDT, LYOTARD AND THE POLITICAL REALM

Kathleen Vandeputte*

Abstract

In *The Lectures on Kant's Political Theory*, Hannah Arendt argues that Kant's *Critique of Judgment* contains the seeds of a political theory. She relates the reflective judgment of taste to political judgment and action. Action, as the quality of freedom in the world of appearances, is the condition of plurality. Arendt examines the political implications of Kant's critical thinking and the thought that critical thinking presupposes universal communicability. This communicability implies, according to Arendt, a concrete sociability. Kant's sensus communis would refer to an empirical community, a public realm of a plurality of social individuals, rising up spontaneously, provisionally and unexpectedly.

The task of the political in Lyotard's view, however, is to testify to the *différend*, i. e. to suppressed genres of discourse. This crucial heterogeneity is ontologically inherent in communication because in expressing one phrase you deny all other phrases to become manifest and therefore they cannot be taken into account. Every linkage, every phrase, is a triumph of one genre above all other genres of discourse. We shall argue that the different conceptions of Arendt's and Lyotard's acknowledgement for «difference» and plurality lead to different views on the public sphere and being-in-community. According to Lyotard, the Kantian sensus communis is a suprasensible Idea, a touchstone, without attaching any reality to it. In making the sensus communis concrete, the universal shareability, lying at the basis of this sensus communis, would blatantly annul the differences between people. Therefore, Lyotard wants to dismantle the illusion of a concrete community in order to avoid one genre wronging the other by solving the *différend* in the idiom of only one of both parties, i. e. one genre becoming totalitarian and no longer testifying to the different genres. Because Lyotard radicalizes the *différend* in this way, the sensus communis can only be a suprasensible Idea and not a concrete sociability as Arendt presupposes. In rethinking the public sphere, this paper ratifies the importance of Arendt's elaboration of the public realm as a concrete community in contrasting it with Lyotard's transcendental view on togetherness.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, Lyotard, Kant, political theory, plurality, communication.

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1. Introduction

This paper highlights the importance of Hannah Arendt's subversive interpretation of the Kantian sensus communis, providing a feasible background to criticise the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard. In *The Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, Arendt argues that Kant's *Critique of Judgment* contains the seeds of a political theory, in relating the reflective judgment of taste to political judgment and action. Arendt examines the political implications of Kant's critical thinking and the idea that this thinking presupposes universal communicability which implies, according to Arendt, a concrete sociability. Hence Kant's sensus communis would refer to an empirical community of social individuals, rising up spontaneously, provisionally and unexpectedly. Not only does this 'community sense' make political, historical and moral judgments possible, it also proves that we are essentially and naturally social beings.

However, the task of the political in Lyotard's view is to 'testify' to the *différend*, i. e. to the oppressed genres of discourse or to a conflict that cannot be resolved by a dominant idiom, due to the absence of a common language. Lyotard contends there is always a *différend* between two phrases, because only one of them can become actualized. As a result, the heterogeneity of genres of discourse becomes ontologically inherent in communication. For Lyotard, politics is about acknowledging the *différend* as if in politics it would only be enough to raise awareness for this *différend*.

What centrally distinguishes Arendt from Lyotard is that the latter conceives the sensus communis as a transcendental Idea, a Kantian touchstone. Therefore, Lyotard criticises Arendt's view of a sensus communis as a real, empirical society. Although she indeed provides an unusual[1] Kantian interpretation of the power of judgment and the sensus communis, she does not forget the quest for a public, political space. That is why we will propose a political and socially manageable alternative of the sensus communis by dint of Hannah Arendt's view. As she claims, the affective community cannot be thoroughly meaningful if this community is perceived exclusively as an Idea since it is only in communicating with each other in a public sphere that objects and our actions become meaningful.[2]

2. Arendt's Reading of the Sensus Communis

In her Kant Lectures, Arendt is mainly interested in elaborating Kant's notion of politics. Since Kant has never written a political philosophy, Arendt searches the origins of his political philosophy where we least anticipated it. She claims that Kant elaborates it in his Third Critique and principally in the characteristics of the power of judgment. This reinterpretation of the Third Critique is markedly an elaboration of the Arendtian idea on politics as an amalgam of speech and action in a space of appearances or a public space. It is vitally important that Arendt is likely to contradict the traditional representation of judging in solitude between me and myself. Quite the reverse, the activity of judging and politics is

constituted by the sound concept of plurality. It is not 'man' inhabiting the earth, but 'men' (the Romans, the political people par excellence, would say 'inter homines esse' which underlines the interdependency of men). Plurality is the condition of human activity, because we are all the very same in being human without ever being identical to one another. Judging is specifically a political activity, rooted in the sensus communis, a community sense, as even the ancient Greeks knew.[3] But Kant's novelty lies in the fact that the revelation of the common world is given by a totally subjective phenomenon, that is to say taste. As Arendt claims:

> «The most surprising aspect … is that common sense, the faculty of judgment and of discriminating between right and wrong, should be based on the sense of taste».[4]

Hence, the most private of the senses becomes the vehicle of the faculty of judgment, which is based on general communicability. How must we comprehend this seemingly paradoxical situation?[5] In order to explain this we must focus on the notion of the spectator and the most seminal characteristics of this spectator, which are imagination, communicability and plurality.[6]

In judging, two mental operations occur which are the operation of imagination and the operation of reflection. The operation of imagination prepares the object for the operation of reflection, which is the actual activity of judging. Our imagination can make objects present in order to judge objects that are no longer present. «Imagination, Kant says, is the faculty of making present what is absent, the faculty of re-presentation. … If I represent what is absent, I have an image in my mind – an image of something I have seen and now somehow reproduce»[7], what Kant names representative thinking. Kant explores this faculty of imagination not only in his Third Critique but also in the First Critique. This very same faculty of imagination, which provides schemata for cognition in the First Critique, provides examples for judgment in the Third Critique. These examples are the go-cart [*Gängelband*] of judgment[8], guiding us in our judgment whereby it acquires exemplary validity. «The judgment has exemplary validity to the extent that the example is rightly chosen».[9] In order to make our judgment valid we must take into account the thoughts of others, what Kant names the *erweiterte Denkungsart*. Due to this enlarged mentality[10], as the capacity to put ourselves in everyone else's place, judgment is the most political faculty of a human kind. The faculty that makes this enlargement possible is called imagination. «To think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one's imagination to go visiting».[11] The enlarged mentality is the condition for impartiality, a standpoint which makes abstraction from our private interests.

> «I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent; that is I represent them. This process of representation does not blindly adopt the actual views of those who stand somewhere else, and hence look upon the world from a different perspective; this is a question neither of em-

> pathy, as though I tried to be or to feel like somebody else, nor of counting noses and joining a majority but of being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not. The more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion».[12]

The ability to judge is consequently an ability whereby mutual assent is possible. Due to this, the subjective determination of one's own judgment will be exceeded and the possibility to impartiality, to a universal position will be accomplished. The two operations of imagination and reflection establish the condition of impartiality, a disinterested delight or an interest in the *uninteressiertes Wohlgefallen*. The disinterestedness, the disposing of your subjective and private interests is crucial for acquiring impartiality. Kantian critical thinking presupposes to take other points of view into consideration in order to aspire to impartiality. The more points of view someone can imagine, the greater the capacity for representative thinking. Interestingly, Arendt does not understand *erweitertes Denken* as the result of rational abstraction of our own or other people's contexts as this applies for Habermas. For him, communication is about reaching a universal judgment through rational argumentation. In contrast, Arendt appeals to the power of imagination to enlarge our thinking in which she takes into account the differences amongst people and their taste. Unlike Habermas, Arendt does not wish to emphasize the cognitive aspect of political judgments because judgments are equipped with an exemplary validity and not a scientific validity. The exemplary validity wants to inspire and convince not by argumentation or proof but by examples, where the singular, particular event is linked to the universal.

This condition of impartiality and of disinterestedness is completely reserved for the spectator, the one who is not involved, contrary to the partial actor participating in the spectacle and searching for doxa or fame. The advantage of the spectator is that he perceives the spectacle as a whole because he can take enough distance from it due to his faculty of imagination. This imagination, given an immediate political role by Arendt, is necessary for making a reflective judgment whereby given, universal rules are absent. Imagination plays a political role for it serves the political representation of the thoughts of others. In *The Crisis in Culture*, Arendt asserts «[t]hat the capacity to judge is a specifically political ability in exactly the sense denoted by Kant, namely, the ability to see things not only from one's own point of view but in the perspective of all of those who happen to be present»[13]. Therefore, the universal viewpoint is occupied, rather by the spectator because it is he who can judge the whole with an enlarged mentality. The condition sine qua non for the spectator to be occupied with is the communicability of his judgments, which creates the space of appearances without which no subject could appear at all. Therefore the public space is inhabited by spectators[14] and not by actors.

So far, I have exclusively spoken of a universal viewpoint, such as Kant would presume[15], but Arendt does not endorse this universality. The approach taken by Arendt is quite different from Kant's expression because Arendt uses the word 'general' instead of claiming a Kantian universal position. Arendt contends that «[t]he greater the reach – the larger the realm in which the enlightened individual is able to move from standpoint to standpoint – the more 'general' will be his thinking»[16], whereas Kant points out to a way of thinking that «… indicates a man with a *broadened way of thinking* if he overrides the private subjective conditions of his judgment, into which so many others are locked, as it were, and reflects on his own judgment from a *universal standpoint…*»[17]. Hence, for Arendt, impartiality is not the result of some higher standpoint that would actually settle the dispute by being altogether above the mêlée[18] whereby the different thoughts of others are reduced to one universal standpoint. Arendt prefers a *specific* or *special* validity, that is to say not universal, in contrast to a Kantian universal validity.[19] As a result, the concept of impartiality determines a general standpoint. Obviously, this is not strictly conform to the Kantian transcendental philosophy but the difference with Kant does not lie in the aspect that Arendt would not perceive the sensus communis as a transcendental Idea since she stresses the *possible* thoughts of others and not the actual ones; she differs in assigning a *general* standpoint to impartiality and not a Kantian universal standpoint. In this way, she contributes to the elaboration of a public, political domain renouncing a universal reason in order to maintain the differences between and the uniqueness of people. As such, hypothetically speaking, her rapprochement to generality may thus function as a renunciation from a universal validity constituted by a universal reason and cognitive propositions. No doubt, Kant would never assume concepts and cognitive propositions lying at the basis of an aesthetic judgment, but his adherence to a universal position indicates an internal tension between his theory of judgment and his exposition of the concept of history as a perpetual progress towards freedom or peace, as Arendt also mentions in her Kant Lectures.[20] This becomes especially clear when we arrive at the closing paragraph of the Kant Lectures.

> «In Kant himself there is this contradiction: Infinite Progress is the law of the human species; at the same time, man's dignity demands that he be seen (every single one of us) in his particularity and, as such, be seen – but without any comparison and independent of time – as reflecting mankind in general. In other words, the very idea of progress – if it is more than a change in circumstances and an improvement of the world – contradicts Kant's notion of dignity. It is against human dignity to believe in progress».[21]

Arendt is concerned with human worth and dignity which demands the removal of metaphysical fallacies, in particular the metaphysical idea of history as a perpetual progress, because «[j]udgment is rendered not by the collective destiny of mankind but by 'man alone', the judging spectator

who stands before nature unencumbered by metaphysical dreams and illusions»[22].

In matters of politics everything depends on publicity which is the key to a political thinking based on representative thinking, general communicability and a sense shared by all of us. Men are interdependent not only for their bodily needs but also for their mental faculties such as judging. As a result the capacity of judging is dependent upon the existence of other men and implies communicability in order to make a valid judgment.

> «For men in the plural, and hence for mankind … it is a natural vocation… to communicate and speak one's mind».[23]

What is constituted in judgments is the world as a communicative, social world. In judging something beautiful, you demand that everyone ought to judge the object beautiful.[24] The idea of a sensus communis, a universal sense (*Gemeinsinn*) as a sort of sixth sense, is presupposed by our judgment of taste as a necessary condition for the universal communicability of our feelings.

> «[W]e must [here] take *sensus communis* to mean the idea of a sense *shared* [by all of us], i. e., a power to judge that in reflecting takes account (a priori), in our thought, of everyone else's way of presenting [something], in order *as it were* to compare our own judgment with human reason in general. … Now we do this as follows: we compare our judgment not so much with the actual as rather with the merely possible judgment of others, and [thus] put ourselves in the position of everyone else, merely by abstracting from the limitations that [may] happen to attach to our own judgment. … Now perhaps this operation of reflection will seem rather too artful to be attributed to the ability we call *common* sense. But in fact it only looks this way when expressed in abstract formulas. Intrinsically nothing is more natural than abstracting from charm and emotion when we seek a judgment that is to serve as a universal rule».[25]

One must have 'common' sense in order to make a judgment of taste. Kant says «the beautiful, interests [us] only [when we are] in society… A man abandoned by himself on a desert island would adorn neither his hut nor his person…»[26]. Providing that judgments always reflect upon others and their taste and takes their possible judgments into account, Kant can claim that taste *is* a sensus communis, a shared sense.[27] Although he contends that man's urge to sociability is natural and is hence, a property of his humanity[28], «[t]his interest, which we indirectly attach to the beautiful through our inclination to society and which is therefore empirical, is, however, *of no importance for us here*, since we must concern ourselves only with what may have reference a priori, even if only indirectly, to a judgment of taste»[29]. Although Kant is not likely to devote attention in elaborating this sociability within the scope of his Third Critique, Arendt is primordially interested in society and in a political, public space of appearances. Therefore she takes one step further in examining the reflective judgment of taste in relation to this society whereby she gives the sensus

communis an anthropological mark. It is necessary to constitute a 'real' community, for men can live nor judge outside this society. Providing that the political implication of critical thinking is communicability, Arendt can assert that «communicability obviously implies a community of men who can be addressed and who are listening and can be listened to»[30]. She offers a certainly more apparent divergence from the Kantian transcendental view when she presumes that the community sense is not endowed with supersensible qualities.

> «Judgment, and especially judgments of taste, always reflects upon others and their taste, takes their possible judgments into account. This is necessary because I am human and cannot live outside the company of men. I judge as a member of this community and not as a member of a supersensible world…»[31]

For this assumption, which deviates severely from Kant's interpretation of the sensus communis as a transcendental Idea, Arendt has experienced severe critique, not in the least from the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, which we will explore in the next paragraph.

3. Lyotard's reading of the Sensus Communis

In his article *Survivant* Lyotard criticises Arendt because, for her, a civil society can produce spontaneously empirical modes of organisations. Providing that Arendt perceives in this capacity the echo of a concrete power of judgment shared by everyone, togetherness can constitute a political and social alternative.[32] For Lyotard this is an erroneously sociological reading of the Kantian sensus communis. In conceiving it as a concrete and social consensus of «we», Arendt risks the elimination of other voices, which is a logical reaction of Lyotard to Arendt, since he is so adhered to the *différend*. In perceiving the sensus communis as a regulative idea with an «as-if» character, it becomes an object of a transcendental Idea and not at all an empirical object. This confusion into an experience of the sensus communis can lead, according to Lyotard, to a claim to a totalitarian ideology because every consensus or every empirical being-in-community is an uncritical linkage between different phrases for he claims that the communicability is throughout transcendentally.[33] I definitely would not force the matter so far as to blame Arendt for pleading totalitarianism for she is, what we can call, the advocate of democratic thinking insomuch as it preserves the differences among men. Whether Arendt's reading of the sensus communis is on the contrary a refreshing approach, is not something Lyotard wants to take into consideration for he contends that we must not query the being-together from the susceptibility of real persons but we must query the *être-ensemble* from the susceptibility of the *non-être*, that what has not yet been articulated.[34] That is why Lyotard will argue in his *Lectures d'enfance*: «Where Arendt is realistic, Kant is analogist, that is to say *enfantin*»[35]. This means as much as saying that Arendt's concrete sociability cannot testify to the *différend*, while Kant and Lyotard, by perceiving the sensus communis as a transcendental as-if

idea, remain critical and are able to respect the *différend*. But because of our critique on Lyotard – the inescapability of the *différend* – we can perceive in Arendt's political philosophy an important account to the differences among human beings in a well-balanced proportion with the pursuit for shareability. Decisions about taste can be made, but this affective community does not therefore have to be a fixed, determinate given, but rather a sociability which preserves the differences between the self and the other and which leaves open the possibility to connect phrases as to avoid terror. She herself speaks of a «potential agreement» and an «anticipated communication with others with whom I know I must finally come to some agreement»[36]. The hermeneutical approach of Hans-Georg Gadamer will proof very helpful in upgrading Arendt's political interpretation of the sensus communis. In Part I of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer claims that Kant «depoliticizes» the idea of sensus communis, which formerly had important political and moral connotations. According to Gadamer, Kant's formal and narrowed concept of judgment empties the older, Roman-rooted, conception of the full moral-political content it once had. Kant, as it were, strips «common sense» of the richness of its Roman and thus more political meaning.[37] It is in the motion of 're-politicization' of the sensus communis by going back to its original Roman sense that Arendt can read Kant's Third Critique politically. From these different readings of Kant, we can conclude that Arendt has given the most cogent interpretation of the sensus communis since she does not give up the quest for a real public space, while Lyotard is more attracted to a transcendental approach which leaves out any empirical interest in a society.

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1 Myriam Revault d'Alonnes even utters the words «Lecture non académique, non exégetique, non orthodoxe. Lecture 'infidèle' …» (Revault d'Allones (1991), *Qu'est-ce que juger?* P. 1).

2 See: Arendt (1989), *The Human Condition*, p. 14–15.

3 Arendt, H. (1977) *The crisis in culture*. In*: Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, p. 221: «The Greeks

called this ability [to judge] φρόνησις, or insight… [T]his judging … has its roots in what we usually call common sense».

4 Arendt (1989), *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, p. 64. (Further, this edition will be referred to as *Kant Lectures*.)

5 As Arendt says: «The following question arises: if taste is the most private sense, why then should taste be elevated and become a vehicle of the mental faculty of judgment?» (Arendt (1989), *Kant Lectures*, p. 64).

6 In his interpretative essay of the *Kant Lectures* (same edition), Ronald Beiner claims that Arendt wrote two theories of judging, the first centering around representative thought and enlarged mentality of political agents, the second focussing on spectatorship and retrospective judgment of historians and storytellers. I would rather presume that Arendt actually never wrote two theories, but that it is more a question of emphasis, because in judging we are both an actor and a spectator. See also: Rancière (2007), *The emancipated spectator*: «We have to acknowledge that any spectator already is an actor of his own story and that the actor also is the spectator of the same kind of story».

7 Arendt (1989), *Kant Lectures*, p. 79.

8 Kant, I. (1963) *Critique of Pure Reason*. Ttrans. N.K. Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press, p. 151.

9 Arendt (1989), *Kant Lectures*, p. 84.

10 Arendt rephrases Kant's notion of *erweiterte Denkungsart* as 'enlarged mentality'.

11 Arendt (1989), *Kant Lectures*, p. 43.

12 Arendt, H. (1977) *Truth and politics*. In: *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, p. 241.

13 Arendt (1977), *The crisis in culture*, p. 221.

14 We cannot say, as Pythagoras did, 'the' spectator because spectators always exist in the plural.

15 See: Kant (1987), *Critique of Judgment*, p. 60, 161–162. (Further, this edition of the *Critique of Judgment* will be referred to as *CJ*.)

16 Arendt (1989), *Kant Lectures*, p. 43.

17 Kant (1987), *CJ*, p. 161.

18 Arendt (1989), *Kant Lectures,* p. 42, paraphrase.

19 As Arendt says: «Hence judgment is endowed with a certain specific validity but is never universally valid» (Arendt (1977), *The crisis in culture*, p. 221).

20 This paper will not elaborate Kant's concept of history since a more detailed elaboration lies outside our scope.

21 Arendt (1989), *Kant Lectures*, p. 77.

22 Beiner R. *Interpretative essay*. In: *Kant Lectures*, p. 127.

23 Arendt (1989), *Kant Lectures*, p. 40.

24 Kant (1987), *CJ*, p. 86.

25 Ibid, p. 160.

26 Arendt (1989), *Kant Lectures*, p. 67.

27 Kant (1987), *CJ*, p. 162.

28 Ibid, p. 163, paraphrase.

29 Ibid, p. 164. [Italics added.]

30 Arendt (1989), *Kant Lectures*, p. 40.

31 Ibid, p. 67.

32 Lyotard (1991), *Survivant*, p. 86–87: «Que la société civile puisse ainsi produire spontanément des modes d'organisations qui protègent les libertés individuelles ou locales concretes – ici particulièrement importantes parce qu'elles concernent l'enfance – contre une loi décrétée loin de l'expérience.., Arendt entend dans cette capacité l'écho d'une puissance de juger concrètement, radicalement, sans théorie ni critère, et qui est partagé par tout ésprit. … l'étre-ensemble par lui-même puisse constituer une alternative politique et sociale au totalitarisme…».

[33] Tacq (1997), *Een hedendaagse Kant. De invloed van Immanuel Kant op contemporaine denkers*, p. 99–100.
[34] Lyotard (1991), *Survivant*, p. 87.
[35] Ibid, p. 69: «Où Arendt est realiste, Kant est analogiste, c'est-à-dire "enfantin"».
[36] Arendt (1977), *The crisis in culture*, p. 220.
[37] See: Beiner, R. (1989) *Interpretative Essay*. In: *Kant Lectures*, p. 136; Gadamer, H.-G. (2004) *Sensus communis*. In: *Truth and Method*. London–New York: Continuum, p. 24–29.

NATALITY AND COMMUNITY: OVERCOMING DEATHCENTEREDNESS OF THE CLASSICAL METAPHYSICAL THINKING

Tatiana Shchyttsova*

Abstract

The paper is dedicated to the clarification of the very sense of the transition from the deathcentered thinking to the birthcentered one. The author argues that shifting from death and mortality to birth and natality as a fundamental motivation of philosophical reflection is the principal feature of the paradigmatic transition from the philosophy of the solipsistic subject to that of being-with-one-another. Historically the paper is based on two intellectual dispositions: Diotima-and-Socrates and Heidegger-and-Arendt. Analyzing them the author tries, first, to clarify contributions of Diotima and Arendt to the *natal turn* of the philosophical thinking and, second, to provide a conceptualization of birth which could prove the overturning potential of this phenomenon in regard to the classical metaphysical tradition.

Keywords: birth, death, mortality, natality, interpersonal community (being-with-one-another), subject, response, historical incarnation.

The European philosophy develops so to say in the shadow of death beginning from Platonian definition of philosophy as a «learning to die». In Christianity as well as in Platonian metaphysics, the relationship between man and the absolute is mediated by the man's relation to his own death. The *true* relation presupposes the transcendence over the worldly order. It is the way how man's participation in the *ordo aeternitatis* is certified. The metaphysical perspective of the finite human being is grounded, thus, on the experience of the radical individualization, which enables that the soul finds oneself isolated and, through such self-isolation reaches the clear relationship to the eternal truth. Thus, beginning from Plato's *Phaedon,* the intimate relation of the subject to death gets a fast fixation. It is the relation which determines the very profile of the European philosophy in so far as this relation provides the subject with a principle of autonomy.

In the 20th century the essential relation of the subject to death has been once again conceptualized in a new manner by Martin Heidegger. According to his approach, the being of Dasein presupposes the ontological priority of self-isolation (Vereinzelung, Unbezüglichkeit)

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just as the Platonian dialogue of the soul with itself or the dialogue with God in the Christian prayer does it. Self-isolation achieved by the authentic relation to death – *Vorlaufen zum Tode* – is essentially connected with a disclosure of the ultimate truth of Da-sein. That is why the question of self-fulfillment of human existence is totally subordinated in Heidegger's fundamental ontology to this death-centered point of view which conditions the solipsistic (mono-logical) profile of the whole analytic of Dasein.

The title of the paper has certainly some evocative implication which means that, instead of the classical *memento mori*, concentration on birth must become a leading clue for the post-classical thinking. What I'll try to do in my paper in this concern is to explore the very sense of the transition from the deathcentered to the birthcentered thinking. The question is: could birth (the very fact of having been born) become a «regulative fact» for philosophical thinking comparable with the regulative meaning mortality used to have for the classical metaphysical tradition? I argue that shifting from death and mortality to birth and natality as a fundamental motivation of philosophical reflection is the principal feature of the paradigmatic transition from the philosophy of the solipsistic subject to that of being-with-one-another. It is remarkable that in the European philosophic tradition – from Plato till Heidegger – there were two systematic attempts to introduce the birthcentered thinking and both of them belong to women.[2] I mean Socrates' counterpart Diotima and Heidegger's one Arendt. Analyzing these intellectual dispositions (Diotima and Socrates, Heidegger and Arendt), I try in the first two parts of this paper to clarify, correspondingly, contributions of Diotima and Arendt to the *natal turn* of the post-classical philosophy. The third part is an attempt to provide a philosophical conceptualization of birth which could prove that the question of birth stays at the very core of the overturning of the classical metaphysical tradition.

Diotima and Socrates

It is worthy of our attention, that after the cosmologic-naturalistic thinking of the pre-Socratian period one can find at the very beginning of the next, Socratian-Platonian, period two *equally original* points of view in respect to metaphysical evaluation of birth and death in human life. Each of these two positions – namely one of Diotima and one of Socrates – presupposes its own distinctive *subordination* between birth and death that allows calling them, correspondingly, the philosophy of birth and the one of death. For the purposes of this paper it would be enough to concentrate in this concern on two Platonian dialogues: *Phaedon* and *Symposium* which let us realize the conceptual divergence between two approaches as well as re-actualize the question of relation between them. Because it was the approach of Socrates (Plato) that became dominating and determined the whole further development of the European philosophical tradition, we have to start with its short description as a *terminus a quo* in order the innovative and alternative character of Diotima's approach could show itself as clear as possible.

The classical metaphysical evaluation of birth and death is realized *sub specie aeternitatis* and can be summarized in two following positions: (1) Death is a kind of an agent of eternity this side of the sphere of ideas as an ontological region of the Truth. The work of death consists in the definitive separation of immortal soul from mortal body. The ultimate *positive* metaphysical role of death lies just in this freeing separation. As long as man, during his finite life, practices such separation (i. e. *dying*) he proves his *participation* in the eternal truth. Philosophizing – as the learning to die – turns to be the most truthful (authentic) way of being of man. (2) In frame of the metaphysical dualism, birth is not only a fact that does not have any positive meaning for the human possibility to participate in the *ordo aeternitatis*, but appears from the very beginning as an ultimate antagonist of such participation. According to the theory of anamnesis, philosophizing must be understood first of all as neutralizing the negative consequences of birth. *Sub specie aeternitatis* consists in the work of birth (of having been born) in the *total* loss (forgetting) of the true knowledge. In this concern, anamnesis is carried out *contra-factical* in respect of birth.

Diotima, like Socrates, is interested in the experience of immortality, in the very access of finite human being to the dimension of eternity. But while as per Socrates it is death that receives a leading metaphysical meaning in this concern, Diotima develops the thought about the leading metaphysical meaning of birth. This reversal becomes possible thanks to the remarkable changing of the initial point of view of philosophical thinking. Without any direct refuting the Platonian ontological order which is built *sub specie aeternitatis*, Diotima nevertheless carries on her meditations so to say *sub specie temporis* and does it in some *positive* sense. This new position of philosophical reflection is worth of clarification. It is true that eternity (the eternal being of the world of ideas) remains a substantial premise for Diotima's new metaphysical project. But, in contrast to Socrates who thinks over the human, worldly, experience of immortality only in the *negative* way – as the learning-to-die – she seeks to show a *positive* finite experience of immortality. One could say: Diotima is not in hurry to finish her human life. Instead of the praising of death and dying she appears in the interests of finite human being while she is projecting a concrete metaphysical teleology for the worldly life.

As a substantiation of this new positive dimension of finite infinity (immortality) Diotima develops the unique teaching about *Eros*. Diotima's figure of Eros incarnates the mentioned dimension as such and is not subordinated to the dualistic logic of Platonism. According to Diotima, Eros is neither mortal nor immortal. He is a genius in that sense that he mediates and binds both ontological dimensions – the mortal and the immortal. The decisive question is by the way: *how this particular erotic activity realizes itself in the phenomenal world*? How does it show itself? According to Diotima, it is the act of the giving birth (to somebody or something) where the ambivalent bond of the mortal and immortal makes itself manifest. The bearing, she says, is that part of immortality and eternity which is allotted to the mortal being.[3]

In the methodical sense the innovative turning-point of Diotima consists in the remarkable turning away from the transcendental telos of pure eternity and in the concentration on the metaphysical experience which is commensurate with the structural and phenomenal conditions of the finite world, i. e. which is *world-loving*. Thus, an «erotic revolution», which establishes a new kind of subordination in the middle of the world, takes place. The leading metaphysical meaning is assigned to birth which constitutes this side of eternity, the highest metaphysical telos for the finite life. The learning-to-die as the pure negativistic (world-hostile) striving for death is subordinated to the new, natal, telos, i. e. to the striving for the giving birth. The philosophical way of being as the ultimate certification of the relation of human being to eternity is ruled by Eros. His world-friendly character is pointed out by Diotima, while she is stressing that love is not at all the striving for the beautiful (wisdom) but the striving for the *bearing* in the beautiful.[4] The giving birth is a *finite* mode, a form, of participation in the eternal. Human being as the metaphysical being (as philosopher) has to *bring into the world* something which takes part in the beautiful.

Philosophy appears as an engendering activity par excellence which is founded on the quasi-transcendental figure of Eros. The above mentioned turning-point in the intellectual orientation of Diotima leads to the principal revision of the metaphysical disparagement of the horizontal inter-personal relations. According to her reflections, a structural dimension of the erotic activity is essentially inter-subjective (dialogical). The being-with, or relatedness, which is characteristic for the finite (worldly) human being, conditions fruitfulness of Eros. The striving for the bearing can take place and be effective only in the space (or to use the German word *im Spielraum* – in the play-space) of a certain *dual* – dialogical or sexual – relationship (what is conceived very well in the English word *inter*course). Eros would not be a genie at all if a constitutive plurality and diversity of finite beings would be a hindrance for him. On the contrary, the world as a realm of differences is that where Eros can display himself. It is his realm, his play-space in the genuine sense. According to this Diotima develops parallel with the classical Platonian interpretation of the dialogical relationship between a philosopher and a beautiful youth, her own interpretation which sounds to some extent heretical in frame of the "official" ontological paradigm.

She does not negate directly the metaphysical priority of the vertical ascent from the sensual beauty to the ideal one. Yet she works out a positive metaphysical meaning of the horizontal interpersonal relations which presupposes irreducibility of those relations to the monologizing hierarchy. Diotima does not teach about the way to the monological participation in the eternal truth. On this way there appears the young Other as an unavoidable means. The way aims at the complete world transcendence and is followed in this sense under the badge of death. Diotima's teaching is developed, on the contrary, from the world perspective, or *sub specie temporis*. As it was said, she seeks to describe the positive finite experience of infinity (immortality). It encourages her to speak about the

infinite in termini of finitude. The intellectual givenness of the idea is not only interpreted as a birth, but considered further in the aspect of the becoming. The philosopher, says Diotima, brings up his child[5]. Here the matter concerns a *genesis* of the idea in the world. And it is this quasi-historical process of the idea-bearing and idea-upbringing which constitutes the positive finite experience of infinity and is the work of Eros. The whole process is considered for all this inter-subjective par excellence. Diotima stresses: the philosopher brings up his 'intelligible' child in cooperation with his friend[6]. She explains intimate relations between both men on the base of the mentioned quasi-historical experience. Indeed, she talks about the children connecting these two men.[7]

The irreducibility of the intersubjective dimension is grounded upon the paradigmatic meaning which the engendering intersexual relationship of man and woman has for the metaphysical experience described above. Pregnancy, maeutics, bearing are, according to Diotima, processes which take place parallel both on the physical level and on the spiritual one. These levels are essentially analogical in respect to the basic intersubjective (dual) structure which is a structural condition for the (worldly) fruitfulness, i. e. for the finite experience of infinity. The general thesis of Diotima is that the genuine metaphysical experience is something which one has in his relation to the Other. The relation is understood neither in the negativistic manner – as the freeing himself from distraction in being-with-one-another – nor in the instrumentalistic one – as a provisional use of the Other on the individual way upward to the eternal truth. Contrary to this Diotima interprets the relation to the Other in the *generative* manner – as the co-participation in the birth of something New.

It is true, that when Diotima evaluates the spiritual child-bearing higher as the physical one[8] she falls into the contradiction with herself insofar namely as the latter plays a paradigmatic role for the former. This contradiction is caused by the Platonian dualistic ontology which remains a fettering frame of her thinking – first of all, in such a decisive aspect as a hypostizing of the substantial eternity beyond the world of finite beings. Any actualizing interpretation of Diotima's teaching should be, then, a radicalizing one in putting the task to revise her core question about the worldly experience of infinity on the ground of the finite human existence which does not have any substantial support (a guarantee of eternity) in the Beyond. There are undeniably solid preconditions for such revision. Development of secular historical consciousness, overcoming the monological paradigm of the classical philosophy, long process of demythologizing, critics of phallus-centrism of the European philosophical tradition – all these trends result in a new intellectual constellation for which Diotima's project of the philosophy of birth – just as the 'worldly' metaphysics of being-with-one-another – seems to be of a paradigmatic meaning.

Heidegger and Arendt

Heidegger was, undoubtedly, not only one of the most consequent thinkers, who, like Diotima, tried to explain human being *sub specie tem-*

poris, but also one of the most radical ones who denied any metaphysical positing of the beyond-world and insisted that human life must be understood on its own ground.[9] At the same time, from the formal point of view, he repeats the classical (from Socrates till Hegel) deathcentered intellectual position while founding the subject's sovereignty (*his* metaphysical status) on the sovereignty of death. The concept of being-unto-death constitutes the very core of the analytic of Dasein which is determined by Heidegger as the metaphysics of finitude. That is why Arendt's famous words, that mortality was the fact which inflamed the West-European metaphysical philosophical thinking beginning from Plato[10], introduce, actually, a new principle of systematization of history of philosophy according to which the last one is divided into the death-period (from Plato till Heidegger) and the birth-one programmatically declared in her book. What we are dealing here with is certainly not just a 'modernized' repetition of the intellectual disposition Socrates – Diotima described above. I shall show that if it would be hardly possible to imagine Heidegger telling the teaching of Arendt it is not because he could not accept her criticism against his deathcenteredness, but because she ignores his own interpretation of birth which contributes very much to the overturning of the classical metaphysical thinking, and first of all, of such its essential feature as the dualistic differentiation of the first, physical, birth and the second, spiritual, one.

Heidegger's existential-phenomenological concept of *facticity,* which is rooted in the very fact of having been born and implies a constitutive rootedness of human being (Self) in a concrete social-historical context of the surrounding world, is an appropriate base for any attempt to re-actualize the natal project of Diotima. In this respect, Heidegger's analytic of Dasein is an important preparation of a future 'natal revolution' even if it must be acknowledged that his transcendental-egological[11] approach excludes such a conceptual innovation. This ambivalency of Heidegger's position conditions, of course, a reducing character of his existential interpretation of birth. Because the very question of the essential connection between existentiality (projecting) and facticity (throwness) is formulated and clarified under conditions of the methodical privilege of death, the concrete phenomenal content of what is called by Heidegger natality (Gebürtigkeit) is negativistic only. The pure formula in this concern is *Dasein exists in the natal way* (gebürtig). As applied to the authentic mode of being the formula means nothing else as an autonomous (sebst-ständig) repetition of my own facticity (social-historical conditionedness) in a new self-project (Selbst-entwurf). This repetition is, according to Heidegger, a basic phenomenon of the authentic historicity of human being and is interpreted by him as a retort (Erwiderung) in respect to those human beings (older generations) who had been 'there' (da) earlier. The retort is understood, thus, as a recall (Widerruf) of what is effective nowadays as the Past. Therefore the connection between existentiality and facticity can be determined as *contra-facticity*, where one can, certainly, catch a remote echo of the contra-factical, *contra-natal*, character of Platonian anamnesis.

Arendt's attempt to discredit deathcenteredness of Heidegger's thinking seems to be as resolute as futile. Resolute, when she, in some emphatic manner, proclaims that people have been born not in order to die, but in order to begin something new[12] or when she puts forward, *instead of* mortality, *natality* as a constitutive (in the German version: Kategorienbildendes) fact for the philosophy of being-with-one-another[13]. One can still catch here a clear echo of Diotima's pathos: as long as we are beings-in-the-world we cannot be possessed by the exercising dying but have to bring something new into the world. Futile, because it was not taken into consideration that Heidegger's existential-atheistic rethinking of the exercising dying breaks through any vulgar (positivistic) metaphysic of the Beyond and because, as I shall show further, the very way of replacement (of mortality by natality) turns to be a remarkable castling which let birth come forward *in the interest of death*.

In order to substantiate the last statement I would like to point out, first of all, that Arendt's conception of natality is in no way opposite – or alternative – to Heidegger's existential analytic. The authentic way of being means, according to him, that subject (Dasein) takes on himself his facticity in order to *renew* it in his new project (self-projecting). In other words, he grounds the factical renewal of history in the factical renewal (re-birth) of singularized self.[14] He explicates the constitutive ability of human being to create the historical world as such – in opposition to the natural world. It is exactly this thesis which has a programmatic character for Arendt. The only difference, which remains in this respect between Heidegger and Arendt, can be fully explained in termini of his teaching, namely as that between the ontological and ontical levels of analysis. While Heidegger clarifies the existential-ontological conditions of possibility of the renewal as a distinctive feature of the human/historical world, Arendt concentrates on concrete actions as *initiatives* in being-with-one-another. She does not ask about the way of constitution of the subject (person) as an ontological capability to initiate something[15] as well as about criterions of newness as such (does, in fact, every (political) action brings something new into the world?). One could probably even say: she does not need it because the answers to these questions can be found in Heidegger's interpretation of the authentic being-unto-death as the ultimate ground of the true existential-historical renewal and initiativeness. But we have to suspend for a time the assumption that Arendt's analysis is based on Heidegger's one just because she pretends to break through his deathcenteredness by focusing on the conception of natality. The question is: does indeed – and to what extent – this conception lead to a kind of natal revolution (the changing of paradigms[16]), i. e. to the establishing of a new kind of subordination between death and birth in our reflections on principles of being-with-one-another?

Let me try to clarify this question by giving a short commentary upon the following quotations from *Vita activa*.

«Since every person, because of her natality, is an initiium, a beginning and newcomer in the world, people can take an initiative, become initiators and promote something new».[17]

«Man is born and together with him a new beginning which he can, in acting, realize by virtue of his natality».[18]

«The new beginning, which comes into the world with every birth, can only make itself meaningful in the world because the new-born has to realize his ability self-dependent to initiate something, i. e. to act».[19]

The notion of natality has, first of all, a purpose to connect the pure fact of having been born with the human ability to initiate ('to give birth' to) something *beyond* the natural order of things. Natality is, thus, a new concept of *transcendence* which is aimed at articulation of specificity of human being as being-in-the-world. Through such conceptualization, birth, as a natural occurrence, gets an additional ('meta') dimension which opens a possibility to comprehend birth as a strictly *human* phenomenon, inasmuch, namely, as person's ability for an initiating action is based on birth. All this is summarized by Arendt in the definition of natality as the ontological precondition of the very possibility of action (i.e. of the taking an initiative). The whole Arendt's attempt of a philosophical rehabilitation of birth seems to be, on my opinion, problematic so far as the only referent of this «precondition of possibility» is a person as a *subject* – an ultimate *origin* – of an initiative. A certain humanistic pathos, which is implied in the consideration of every *born* person as an *a priori* source of creative renewal in the world, turns to be connected with the methodological individualism of her interpretation and, finally, with the atomistic vision of community. Following Arendt's reflections on natality, we cannot avoid the question of a form of the political life which is supposed to be based on the co-existence of independent subjects of initiatives. Indeed, according to Arendt, it is natality in the light of which the person appears as a totality, namely the *natal totality,* whose uniqueness is considered just given with (from) the fact of birth.[20] Based on such natal totalities, community of singular beings reveals itself as the atomistic one. Philosophical implications of this vision are well known. One has either to apply for some «third», higher, harmonizing force or to work out mechanisms of 'building bridges' (achieving concurrence) between different origins of initiativeness. Combination is also possible.

It follows that birth fulfills in Arendt's theory actually the same function as death does in Heidegger's. Birth coincides with death in that decisive regard that person gets a status of the autonomous subject of initiatives through the intimate, *monopolistic*, attitude to her own birth. That is birth, as death by Heidegger, is considered by Arendt *unrelated* (unbezüglich) and, owing to such consideration, becomes an ultimate principle of individualization. She proposes such a treatment of birth which deprives it of any hint of facticity, conditionedness, relatedness. Natality receives its categorical (ontological) meaning at the cost of what constitutes the essential difference of birth from death, i. e. at the cost of the relational character of birth. As far as the philosophical interpretation of

birth has to clarify the meaning and implications of this relatedness both for individual existence and for being-with-one-another Heidegger's conceptualization of birth is a very important step in this concern because he shows that throwness entails a *not-being self-grounding*, whereas Arendt's conception of natality is, rather, a step behind because she abstracts the fact of birth from its constitutive relatedness. Doing so, Arendt, indeed, simply replaces death by birth for the sake of the same conceptual function. As it were birth is a representative of death. In other words, the authentic being-unto-death described by Heidegger remains the hidden ground of her conception of natality which is, thus, still subordinated to the methodological privilege of death. The philosophy of the subject, whose autonomy (Selbst-ständigkeit) is supported by the isolation provided by the relation of the individual to his own death, remains a fettering frame of her thinking.

The birth constellation

Differences between the philosophical thematisation of birth in Diotima and Arendt as well as corresponding limitedness of their interpretations demand to clarify what kind of conceptualization of birth could, indeed, prove its methodological privilege for the post-classical thought concerned, in various aspects, with constitutive principles of being-with and being-together. What we need for this purpose is a sort of basic birth constellation, i.e. explication, in some systematic manner, the initial disposition which is constituted by birth and bearing in the human world. Diotima and Arendt broach and work out various aspects of such a natal constellation which can be, thus, to a considerable extent reconstructed on the base of their interpretations. ***Person is born and, in being with the other(s), can give birth to somebody/something else.*** This is the first, very formal and certainly not full description of the birth constellation as it can be explicated from joint meditations of Diotima and Arendt who tried to put the European thought on the *contra-mortal* way of thinking, i.e. on the way where authenticity of human being (its 'metaphysical happiness') should not be any more the question of the *solitary* (ergo world-hostile, others-hostile) relation of the individual to some ultimate trans-worldly truth, but should be that of the relation to the Other(s), of a *participation* in a concrete being-with-one-another *as* being-in-the-world.

However, as we have seen, their attempts turned to be just contradictory heresies in the frame of the corresponding predominant systems of thinking – the hierarchic (dualistic) ontology, on the one hand and the philosophy of the independent Subject, on the other. It is this subordination that caused, in each case, not only fragmentariness in the elucidation of the birth constellation but also a particular distortion in its conceptualization. It is to emphasize in this concern that two general points of view in the thematisation of birth presented correspondingly by Diotima and Arendt – that of *the bearing the Other* and that of *my own birth* – must supplement each other. In the similar way, while a decisive distortion in Diotima's interpretation – depreciation of the physical bearing in the light

of the eternal truth postulated beyond the world of finite beings – can be unmasked just on the base of the *secular* position shared (with Heidegger) by Arendt, a crucial distortion in Arendt's treatment of birth – its deprivation of the relational character – can be exposed in the light of the consequent *intersubjective* approach of Diotima. Mutual supplementation and mutual correction of their two approaches, two attempts to built the philosophy of being-with-one-another proceeding from the fact of birth, must help us to explicate an *overturning* potential of birth so far as the overcoming of deathcenteredness of the classical metaphysical thinking proves to be the overturning of the metaphysical tradition as such.

The overturning potential of birth is rooted undoubtedly in its irreducible relatedness. Birth, taken as my own birth, is such an occurrence which *decentrates* me as a subject (even as a transcendental subject, as Heidegger showed it in the conception of throwness). In the historical (diachronistic) perspective I am related by the fact of birth to the concrete social-cultural preconditions of my individual life. In the interpersonal (synchronistic) one – to the couple whose intercourse resulted in my birth and, first of all, to the woman who born me. This double relatedness, which implies fundamental involvement in being-with-the-others and constitutive dependence on such involvement, is fixated grammatically in the passive form *he was born* – in contrast to the active one *he is dying, he died*. It is true that death – even in the case of suicide – happens *to* me. It is the absolute transcendence which *takes* my life and puts thereby an end to

my self-projecting activity (Levinas). In the face of the coming death an individual is totally passive, no less than in the face of the fact of having been born. If, nevertheless, philosophical reflection made the relation to death to the principal ground of the individual's autonomy, it is because there is not any 'objective' mediation between me and the occurrence of 'my' death. It is death itself which takes my life, whereas my birth is given to me through/by the other(s). So far as the concept of the Subject is associated first of all with an autonomous activity (ontological, epistemological, moral), such activity proceeds from the «point of sovereignty» which is revealed through the intimate – unmediated – relation to death and has a *power potential* whose 'omni-potency' is just a reverse side of the absolute powerlessness in the face of the death.

So, *he is dying/he died* is nothing else as grammatical fixation of the ontology of the Subject who is active due his intimate relation to death. What is fixated there, is not, thus, «the order of things», but just a certain *interpretation* representing the interests of the concrete intellectual position. It is not difficult to see that the essential feature of this position should be the striving for some *ahistorical apriori*.

Is not it, on the contrary, the principal feature of the so called post-metaphysical thinking (marked by a number of constitutive "turns": such as linguistic turn, hermeneutic turn, communicative turn) to locate the question of truth in the context of concrete, historically conditioned, 'horizontal' interconnections, interactions, interrelationships? Does not the regulative principle of contemporary philosophy – that of the «incarnation of the transcendental Subject» – correspond to the methodological posi-

tion of the 'natal thinking' which (already in Diotima) combines secularism (the world-loving) and the intersubjective approach and deals as such with embodiment and relatedness, i.e. with what is constitutive and meaningful *in concreto* for persons who are involved in the open process of their being-with-one-another? Does not, indeed, the word «incarnation» in the mentioned motto imply that philosophy turns to the *objective* truths which are historically (social-cultural) conditioned, i. e. related to the concrete participation of the embodied subjects in a certain interpersonal community (its interactions, communications etc.)? If so, it would mean actually that post-metaphysical philosophical reflection is carried out *in the light of the fact of birth* so far namely as it is the very fact of having been born that conditions facticity – *the factical apriori* – of the individual life. In some sense, contemporary thinking just lets the transcendental Subject to be born. It becomes curious about the *historical apriori* and the way of subject's participation in its *historical* changing – i. e. about all that comes into force by virtue of the fact of birth and presupposes, on account of the same fact, the decentration of the Subject as a self-grounding monarch in the reign of the eternal (ahistorical) truth. I have shown, to what extent such dethronement implies the overturning of deathcenteredness of the classical intellectual position. The decentration of subject is, thus, the decisive expression of the natal turn of the post-classical thought.

The antisubjectivistic approach, cultivated in the scope of the natal turn, had to clarify a new principle of individualization which, contrary to being-unto-death, should have at the same time a positive constitutive meaning for being-*with*-one-another. Clarification of such principle is possible only from the perspective of the irreducible involvement of person into the concrete life of the interpersonal community. According to this point of view, which has been, in very different ways, worked out by such influential contemporary thinkers as, for example, Bakhtin, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Waldenfels, Habermas and many others, it is not enough to say that the person participates in a plural community. It is important to take into consideration that person's participation (acting, in Arendt's terminology) has «always already» the character of *responding* related to the other(s) and to the whole situation all of them are involved in. What is meant here is a fundamental affectedness, or passivity, of human being. Passivity, which is engraved in the subject by the fact of birth and has a strict ethical sense rigorously expressed by Bakhtin in the apt formulation that the person does not have an *alibi* in his/her being. *Person has to respond*. It is his/her genuine definition which underlies every action and points out the *antisubjectivistic ground of any initiativeness*. The principle of responsiveness grasps the way how the person gets self-identity and self-realization, proves his/her irreplaceability and participates in community. It is constitutive both for the process of individualization and for realization of community itself.

Comprehension of the human being as the *being-in-responding (to)* opens a new perspective for conceptualization of birth because this definition binds the initial fact of person's birth with his/her participation in the historical life of interpersonal community. The physical fact of human

birth (of having been born) gets thereby a meta-physical meaning in the light of that historical *incarnation* which self undergoes in responding to the others. Such incarnation can never be accomplished because self always encounters the task of a new determination in a new situation. It allows, thus, defining birth as a *historically meaningful incarnation which has a beginning and continuation in the historical realization of concrete interpersonal community and takes place in the form of a response*. To exist in the natal way would mean then to exist as a responding being. Appearance of a new-born child has in this sense a paradigmatic meaning. Indeed, one says about a pregnant women – she is *expecting* a child. The last one appears in response, or as an answer, to her expecting. The response is a genuine way of being of every birth as an entry of the New into history[21]. The differentiation between the first (physical) birth and the second (spiritual) one is no more relevant for the post-metaphysical investigations of the being of self and being-with-one-another. Historical incarnation (realization), conceived as a practical task, demands from person to concentrate herself on the *memento nasci* and to interpret this new motto as the *having-to-response* in the interpersonal community. Exploring the fact of birth as the leading clue for the decentration of the Subject, one could, thus, discredit the individualistic self-conceit of the Subject regarding uniqueness of his human birth. I mean that acting as carrying out an initiative is not grounded (how Arendt supposed it) on natality as the principle of subject's unrelated ability to be a new beginning, but just the reverse. Birth receives the paradigmatic meaning of the new beginning in the light of person's responding participation in being-with-one-another. What is the ontological precondition of the «initiative of act» is not the fact of man's birth as such[22], but the fact of having to response in being-with-one-another.

It must be emphasized here that the response-principle binds both thematic lines in the birth constellation: that, which concerns my own birth, and that, which concerns the giving birth to the child (though it were in the natural sense or in the metaphorical one). Birth as the continuous historically meaningful incarnation happens to me through my responding (incl. responsible) activity in being-with-the-others. Deeds, words, different projects and initiatives are decisive expressions of such my 'incarnation-to-be-continued', or better to say its worldly dimensions. They are just fruits of my involvement in being-with-one-another. That is why, strictly speaking, they proceed not from me as an independent source of fruitfulness but from togetherness, from *being-with* (That is why Bakhtin, who was strongly interested in the nature of the «initiative of act»[23], stresses that every word – word as an act –– has essentially more than one author[24]). In conclusion I would like to remind that Diotima keeps this co-operative, intersubjective, structure of worldly creativity insofar as she takes the natural creativity of the intersexual relationship as a paradigm. Undoubtedly, the birth constellation remains formal until the intersexual relationship becomes its integral constitutive part. At the same time, it was underlined that the contemporary actualization of the Diotima's philosophy of birth should revise the theoretical grounds which demanded

from her the depreciation of the physical, heterosexual, giving birth to the child in comparison to the meta-physical, homosexual (homological), giving birth to the idea or virtue. In this regard, it is remarkable enough that Arendt, with her differentiation between the social sphere and the political one, does not overcome actually the classical hierarchy between the natural giving birth to the child and the supra-natural initiating of something new. While assuming that appearance of new generations of people is the ultimate condition for the public life, she disengages herself totally from the question of the political meaning (dimension) of the intersexual relationship. These short remarks, I hope, allow comprehending to what extent the so called gender decentration of the subject is a part of the natal turn of the postmetaphysical thinking (marked systematically by the incarnation of the transcendental subject and by the seeking for the historical apriori). It looks as if the intersexual relationship would be the most difficult 'junction' in the birth constellation. There is, obviously, nothing surprising in this situation so far as deathcenteredness of the classical philosophy was systematically connected with its androcenteredness. That is why the very logic of the natal turn demands the fundamental rethinking of that fruitfulness in the historical realization of community which is possible on the base of such a constitutive feature of the *conditio humana* as the sexual difference. Trying in this regard to contribute to the natal turn of the post-metaphysical thinking, one should take into consideration that according to basic intuitions both Diotima's and Arendt's birthcenteredness does not imply at all any kind of gynacenteredness. The strategic formula of their natal aspirations is rather *creativity-in-plurality* which expresses the very sense of the world-loving attitude of both thinkers. It must be very helpful for the understanding of Arendt's work to know that the initial title for the book *Vita activa* (in English *The Human Condition*) was *«Amor mundi»*.[25]

References

1 The article was accomplished during a period of research as Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the Research Center of Eugen Fink (Freiburg), hosted by Prof. Dr. Hans Rainer Sepp.

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9 See, f. ex., the early (1922) work of Heidegger M. *Phänomenologische Interpretation zu Aristoteles (Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation)*. In: *Dilthey Jahrbuch* 6, 1989. S. 235–269.

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[18] Ibid, c. 243.
[19] Ibid, c. 14–15.
[20] Ibid, c. 232f.
[21] History is understood here dynamically, as historical realization of interpersonal community.
[22] «Philosophisch gesprochen ist Handeln die Antwort des Menschen auf das Geborenwerden als seine der Grundbedingungen seiner Existenz: da wir alle durch Geburt als Neuankömmlinge und als Neu-Anfänger auf die Welt kommen, sind wir fähig, etwas neues zu beginnen» (Arendt, H. *Macht und Gewalt*. München–Zürich, 1994. S. 81.
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PRAXIS, LOGOS AND THEORIA – THE THREEFOLD STRUCTURE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

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Abstract

Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* is famous for the distinction between *Vita Activa* (the intersubjective life of action) and *Vita Contemplativa* (the contemplative and solitary life in the realm of thought). One of the most problematic aspects of this distinction seems to be the question of how the *Vita Activa* and *Vita Contemplativa* are interrelated.

In this paper I argue that in order to understand how the two modes of human life are interrelated, careful attention must be paid to how Arendt uses the concepts of *praxis* (action), *theoria* (theory) and *logos* (language). I claim that Arendt is making neither an ontological nor a transcendental distinction between two radically different modes of being. She is not promoting a dualistic ontology or an elitist conception of society. Instead, Arendt claims that the two realms are tightly intertwined in the multifaceted human life.

For Arendt, philosophy is a form of practice that is always tied to the use of language. Unlike the Ancient Greek philosophers and later rationalist thinkers – for whom reason (*nous*) precedes language (*logos*) – Arendt holds that thinking is always already linguistic. Human beings think in terms of concepts and metaphors. The disclosure of who someone is happens by means of speech and action. Thus, it is politically significant what concepts we use for describing various events and phenomena. This awareness of the role of language brings in also an element of responsibility into Arendt's philosophy. Political action (*praxis*) requires a theoretical framework according to which human beings can act politically. However, this theory cannot be conceptualized in the form of a totalitarian or divine law. Instead, for Arendt the contingent and fragile human habitat must be supported by legal institutions and agreements such as international law. The relevance of Arendt's philosophy is thus still significant when analyzing such contemporary political phenomenon as the «war on terrorism».

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, human life, language, theory, political action.

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Adolf Eichmann's inability to reflect on abstract moral values and conventions was according to Hannah Arendt a result of his resistance to *think* independently. Driven by repetitive, cliché ridden use of language and habits, Eichmann had created a wall around himself that distorted his conception of reality (Arendt, 1963/1994: 49; Arendt, 2003b: 160). In addition to writing a report on the trial for *The New Yorker*, the purpose of *Eichmann in Jerusalem – A report on the Banality of Evil* was to give an account of the dreadful effects that a totally bureaucratic society can have on an individual. For Arendt, the character of Adolf Eichmann was what she called an «ideal type». The characteristic of Eichmann's inability to think represented for Arendt all those people who participated in one way or the other in the Nazi movement and in the holocaust.[1] It was this dramatic comparison with a Nazi officer and a general tendency that may be actualized in all human beings, that arouse a tremendous critique against the book.[2]

In her lecture *Thinking and Moral Considerations* from 1971 – in which she returns to Eichmann's inability to think – Arendt justifies her choice of using ideal types. Here Socrates' character functions as the critical thinker *par excellence* and Arendt states that «...the great advantage of the ideal type is precisely that he is not a personified abstraction with some allegorical meaning ascribed to it, but that he was chosen out of the crowd of living beings, in the past or the present, because he possessed a representative significance in reality which only needed some purification in order to reveal its full meaning» (Arendt, 2003b: 169). The representative significance of Adolf Eichmann is that he is a person who has become the prisoner of unexamined routines, social conducts and empty language. The «banality» of his evil deeds was according to Arendt not due to some Satanic or demonic wickedness, nor due to severe mental illness, but due to a lack of reflective thought and thereupon lack of judgment.

The trial of Adolf Eichmann and the conclusions that Arendt drew from this trial made her begin to examine the conception of thinking in the history of Western philosophical and political thought. If the lack of questioning and examining given moral conducts and codes of expression can lead one to blind obedience of rules, can critical thinking prevent one from comitting terrible deeds? Could it be that thought and action were connected in some morally significant way? In order to be able to give an answer to such questions, Arendt regarded it necessary to examine the *experience* of thinking. However, instead of attempting to define what thinking is, Arendt guided her inquiry by asking «what makes us think» (Arendt, 1978a: 125)?[3]

Philosophy as critical examination of the present

Arendt refered to her own way of thinking as *Selbstdenken* (thinking for oneself) and as *Denken ohne Geländer* (thinking without banisters) (Arendt, 1978c: 258; Bernstein, 2002: 279).[4] However, she rarely made any explicit statements about her «method» of thinking. Thus her train of thought must be traced from her actual writings, where her thought is in

action. Arendt's conceptual distinctions and mixing of litterary genres work for a purpose. For her, philosophy is a type of practice always tied to the use of language (Young-Bruehl, 1982/2004: 318). The task of thinking thus becomes to critically trace and examine such arguments, lines of thought and statements that have become habitual and common for us. Thus the task is also a practice tied to history. However, according to Arendt, thinking produces no end results or final statements. Instead, «the winds of thought» are destructive, they «...undo, unfreeze as it were, what language, the medium of thinking has frozen into thought – words (concepts, sentences, definitions, doctrines)...» (Arendt, 2003b, 175). By showing the context and philological origins of various «truths» and how they have evolved in the history of Western political and philosophical thought, Arendt aims to disclose the underlying presuppositions in the ways we use various notions and concepts today (Kohn, 2003: x–xi; Young-Bruehl, 1982/2004: 318).

At the end of the first book of the *The Life of the Mind* – called *Thinking* – Arendt reflects on her «method» in the following way:

> «I have clearly joined the ranks of those who for some time now have been attempting to dismantle metaphysics, and philosophy with all its categories, as we have known them from Greece until today. Such dismantling is possible only on the assumption that the thread of the tradition is broken and we shall not be able to renew it. Historically speaking, what actually has been broken down is the Roman trinity that for thousands of years united religion, authority, and tradition. The loss of this tradition does not destroy the past, and the dismantling process itself is not destructive; it only draws conclusions from a loss which is a fact and as such no longer a part of the "history of ideas" but of our political history, the history of the world» (1978a: 212).

Jacques Taminiaux and Dana Villa characterize Arendt's way of thinking as a form of deconstruction (Taminiaux, 1992/1997; Villa, 1996). In contrast to Heidegger's *destruction*, Arendt's aim is not to discover *the* authentic origin of our ways of thinking about Being, nor is it an effort to articulate the authentic vision of truth. Instead, Arendt's motives are ethical and political. It is to aim at the understanding of how we came to think about various political and philosophical phenomena in the ways that we do. Despite their differences, what is perhaps less evident is that Arendt's method bears a resemblance to Michel Foucault's «ontology of the present»[5] (Allen, 2002: 141–142; Altunok, 2005: 3–4). In the introduction to *The Use of Pleasure* Foucault writes of the task of philosophy:

> «There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking or reflecting at all. ... But then, what is philosophy –philosophical activity, I mean –if it's not the critical work that thought bears to bring on itself? In what does it consist, if not in the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of *legitimating* what is already known? There is

> always something ludicrous in philosophical discourse when it tries, from the outside, to dictate to others, to tell them where their truth is and how to find it, or when it works up a case against them in the language of naive positivity» (Foucault, 1985: 8–9, italics added).

Arendt herself writes in a similar manner of the political implications of her method of dismantling in *Thinking and Moral Considerations*:

> «The purging element in thinking, Socrates' midwifery, that brings out the implications of unexamined opinions and thereby destroys them – values, doctrines, theories, and even convictions – is political by implication. For this destruction has a liberating effect on another human faculty, the faculty of judgment, which one may call, with some justification, the most political of man's mental abilities. It is the faculty to judge *particulars* without subsuming them under those general rules, which can be taught and learned until they grow into habits that can be replaced by other habits and rules» (Arendt, 2003a: 189, italics in the original text).

Since for Arendt action (*praxis*) is a capacity to take initiative, to break with the habits and begin something new, philosophy as linguistic *praxis* can function as a possibility enabling us to think differently about our history and about our present. The break of the tradition means that the framework and posing of traditional metaphysical questions have lost its plausibility (Arendt, 1978a: 10). «What you are left with is still the past, but a *fragmented* past, which has lost its certainty of evaluation» (Arendt, 1978a: 212). For Arendt, history has neither a beginning nor an end. Instead, it is a narrative patchwork of events evaluated from multiple perspectives at particular times in particular places (Arendt, 1958/1998: 184–185; Vowinckel, 2001: 343). Philosophy as a critical examination of the present thus aims at an understanding of various contemporary phenomena, not at legitimating the necessity of historical process and doctrines of knowledge.

In the following I aim to shed light on a particular problem that Arendt wanted to dismantle and understand. This is the opposing of the life of thinking (*bios theōrētikos* and *Vita Contemplativa*) to the life of action (*bios politikos* and the *Vita Activa*) in the history of Western thought. Contrary to the general, historical conceptions of these two realms, Arendt claims that *praxis* and *theōria* are neither ontologically nor transcendentally separated. Instead the two are two drastically differing aspects, though always interrelated through discoursive, linguistic thought (*logos*).

The experience of thinking from the perspective of the *Vita Contemplativa*

Whereas Arendt devoted herself in *The Human Condition* to the investigation of the active life (*Vita Activa*) and especially the indeterminate and unpredictable nature of human action (*praxis*), in volume one of *The Life of The Mind*, called *Thinking*, Arendt engages herself in a

historical archeology of the dichotomous distinction between thought and action. Whereas the perspective in *The Human Condition* was that of the *Vita Activa*, the viewpoint has now shifted to the perspective of the *Vita Contemplativa*. The investigation is presented through a description of the *experience* of metaphysical reflection. In Richard Bernstein's words, «Arendt's project, especially in *The Life of the Mind*, might be characterized as developing a phenomenology of thinking» (Bernstein, 2000/2002: 286). Arendt's claim is that if we look at the descriptions of thinking in the history of Western philosophy, there seems to be something inherently isolating and solitary in the experience of metaphysical reflection, that is, in «thinking» (Arendt, 1978a: 197–199).

What is special in the first part of *The Life of the Mind* is that Arendt takes seriously the various descriptions of thinking that philosophers have given throughout centuries, instead of simply dismissing them as worn out and implausible.[6] Arendt's hypothesis is that if we are able to understand what for example Plato and Aristotle meant with wonder (*thaumazein*), what Dun Scotus and the medieval Christian philosophers meant with the infinite presence (*nunc stans* and *nunc aeternitas*) or what Descartes meant with «metaphysical meditations», then we can get a picture of some of the key elements in the faculty of reflective thought.

> «The metaphysical fallacies contain the only clues we have to what thinking means for those who engage in it – something of great importance today and about which, oddly enough, there exists very few direct utterances» (Arendt, 1978a: 11).

Arendt claims that although in perception the appearing, phenomenal world is always experienced as a spatio-temporal unity and background of our movement, metaphysical reflection somehow seems as if it is able to annihilate both time and space. Arendt gives several examples of this strange experience:

> «It is as though I had withdrawn to a never-never land, the land of invisibles, of which I would know nothing, had I not this faculty of remembering and imagining. Thinking annihilates temporal and spatial distances... As far as space is concerned, I know of no philosophical or metaphysical concept that could plausibly relate to this experience; but I am rather certain that the *nunc stans*, the standing now, became the symbol for eternity – the "*nunc aeternitas*" (Dun Scotus) – for medieval philosophy because it was a plausible description of experiences that took place in meditation as well as in contemplation, the two modes of thought known to Christianity» (Arendt, 1978a: 87–88).

These experiences of withdrawal to silence and solitude makes – according to Arendt – possible such philosophical doctrines as Plato's doctrine of ideas and the Cartesian mind-body dualism (Arendt, 1978a: 84–85; 197–213). This is because reflective *consciousness* is capable of focusing away from our everyday bodily awareness. However, this does of course not imply that the most basic structures of consciousness and embodiment

would stop functioning during meditation. The strangeness that Arendt locates is rather in the *experience* of not being aware of one's own body (Arendt, 1978a: 162–163). Arendt stresses that also our imagination is to a large extent voluntary, whereas bodily sense-perception is not. The experience of momentarily freedom from bodily needs is dramatically characterized in Plato's cave parable and also in the Greek conception of *thaumazein* – a type of wonder at the face of the world which is compulsive in the sense that wonder is not a matter of choice, but something that has to be endured. Arendt pays attention to the fact that in the context of this admirable wonder, the concept «world» means the harmonous *kosmos* or eternal universe, not the perishable and ever changing world of human affairs (Arendt, 1978a: 142–143).

The separation of thought and language in Ancient Greek philosophy

Acording to Arendt, it is the experience of silent and still, meditative thinking that leads to the ancient distinction between reason (*nous*) and language (*logos*). Arendt holds that for Parmenides, Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, the divine capability of the philosopher is his use of reason (*nous*), through which he can think (*noein*) and look (*theorein*) at the eternal truth and thereby become united with the imperishable kosmos and the Divine (Arendt, 1978a: 93, 129, 136). Arendt explains that for example Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, holds this type of thinking to be *athanatizein* – to immortalize oneself (Arendt, 1978a, 136). The theoretical way of life, which for the Greeks was called *bios theoretikos* and for the medieval Christians the *Vita Contemplativa* becomes – with these *deliberate* choices of notions – the highest form of human life (Arendt, 1958/1998: 14–15; 1978a: 137).

Arendt notes that this old conception is based on an analogy between vision and thought. Reason is held to be non-linguistic (*aneu logou* and *arrheton*) (Arendt, 1978a: 137–138; Arendt, 1958/1998: 17–21). The philosopher simply sees the truth through his use of reason. However, the content of this non-linguistic truth must be expressed to other philosophers in the form of spoken words or written texts, if the philosophical tradition is to remain alive from generation to generation. Arendt remarks that for example Aristotle notices that after the thought-process, one must attempt to express the contents of thinking as truthfully as possible (Arendt, 1978a: 137). But in order for this to be possible, one must assume an isomorphic relation between thoughts and words. This is because the truth that the philosopher sees is according to Aristotle and Plato not a mere opinion (*doxa*), but an eternal truth (*aletheia*). However, speech and written texts inevitably belong to the perishable and contingent world of human affairs, since they are material. *Logos* is simply the capacity of mortals to say what is as it is. Thus Plato and his followers did not regard language (logos) as divine. The truth seen by the philosophers is regarded as being independent of who sees it. Therefore, the paradox is that the non-linguistic truth apprehended by reason, becomes the criteria for

truthful speech (*logos apophantikos*), which again – paradoxically – is always linguistic (Arendt, 1978a: 137–138). The exchange of mere opinions in the world of human affairs is regarded as less valuable and secondary to the eternal truths apprehended by thinking.

This distinction has dramatical consequences for the realm of politics and action. Plato's utopia of the philosopher-king who, through the use of supratemporal laws rules the state as a dictator – the one who literary dictates to others who obey – and Hegel's conception of the Absolute Spirit as the true subject of teleological worldhistory are dramatic examples of a philosophical theory for politics. In both cases, the «point is to eliminate the accidental» and the contingent (Arendt, 1978a: 139; Arendt 1968/1993a: 112–113; Arendt 1952/2004: 599–601). Arendt credits Nietzsche for being brave enough to question the eternal validity of idelogies and moral conducts and seeing the presuppositions lying beneath our use of concepts (Arendt, 2003a: 162–163).

> «The difficulty to which the "awesome science" of metaphysics has given rise since its inception could possibly all be summed up in the natural tension between *theoria* and *logos*, between seeing and reasoning with words, – whether in the form of "dialectics" (*dia-legesthai*) or, on the contrary, of the "syllogism" (*syl-logizesthai*), i. e., whether it takes things, especially opinions, apart by means of words or brings them together in a discourse depending for its truth content on a primary premise perceived by intuition, by the nous, which is not subject to error because it is not *meta logou*, sequential to words» (Arendt, 1978a: 120).

Arendt holds that the condition for the possibility of these experiences of timeless and non-spatial meditation is an imaginary abstraction from the way the world is originally given to us in sensible perception (Arendt, 1978a: 199). Our perceptual experience is dependent on a conception of spatial dimensions and thus we refer even to temporal tenses by using expressions such as «the past is behind us» and «the future is ahead of us» (Arendt, 1978a: 205–206). The conceptual language we use for describing our mental experiences, such as various forms of thinking, is a derivative from the language we use for describing perception. Thus, the ancient distinction between *nous* and *phainomena* – or in modern terms, between the «mental» and the «physical» – is not an ontological distinction, but a conceptual distinction, rooted in our use of language. Even in deep meditation, the thinking mind is still an embodied mind connected to the appearing, phenomenal world by means of the body and language (Arendt, 1978a: 162; Arendt, 1978b: 55). The perceived objects carry with them an indication that they are indeed objects for several subjects.

Discoursive thought and the intertwining of the *Vita Contemplativa* and the *Vita Activa*

Arendt's point is that the withdrawal to the subjective realm of reflective consciousness in the form of thinking presupposes the existence of an intersubjective community that shares a common world as the background

of perception and a common linguistic system as a reference point for thought. This is because according to Arendt, reflection takes its bearings from the visible world of perception and apprehends its structures by means of conceptual thought. Thus thinking is always already intertwined with language. The intentional bond between the philosopher and the world can never be interrupted by means of a philosophical method because language binds thought and the world (Arendt, 1978a: 110). *Nous* and *logos* – reason and language – are inseparable because thinking is discoursive (Arendt, 1978a: 31, 101; Honkasalo, 2006: 56–60).

Whenever we want to describe a perception, an experience or a thought-pattern, we need to rely on some form of a language or system of signs. This can be sign language, speech or a written text, but the criteria is that the language is constructed through a set of common rules of use for that particular language (Burks, 2002, §25–27, 33). Arendt admits that we might feel that we cannot adequately express our most personal experiences or complex thoughts properly in any type of language, since the experience of thinking is very different from for example the experience of perceiving something or doing something practical. It may appear as if something essential to the experience or thought disappears the moment it is brought into language. Thus Arendt asks:

> «Was it not precisely the discrepancy between words, the medium in which we think, and the world of appearances, the medium in which we live, that lead to philosophy and metaphysics in the first place?» (Arendt, 1978a: 8).

The problem concerning knowledge regarding the true metaphysical nature of the universe arises precisely because we cannot achieve a neutral point outside language from which we could evaluate which is prior to the other, thought to language or the other way around. Linguistic concepts are learned through the use of a flexible, historical language-system that we are born into. We learn to point to and speak about perceived objects by means of a linguistic system that has a set of common rules. Thus, according to Arendt, meaning arises through the use of words in particular sentences, in a particular natural language (Arendt, 1978a: 99, 171, 175). However, Arendt does not regard language and its concepts as somehow innate. Language is rather an elastic and holistic network whose concepts change within historical periods, and cultural contexts, through the creative inventions of language-using human beings who disclose themselves through speech and action.[7]

> «Human plurality is the paradoxical plurality of unique beings. Speech and action reveal this unique distinctness. Through them, men distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct; they are the modes by which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects but qua *men*. With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance» (Arendt, 1958/1998: 176).

Here Arendt's conception of action is perhaps most clearly tied to language. In sections 24–26 of chapter V (Action) in *The Human Condition*, Arendts elaborates on the connection between narration and meaningfulness. Actions are meaningful due to the fact that they always happen against the background of an intersubjective community, the «web of human relationships» (Arendt, 1958/1998: 188; Tsao, 2002: 103). In a similar way as thinking needs to be conceptualized in order for its content to be comprehesible for others, also action needs to be conceptualized in the form of a story so that it can have durability in the fragile and changing human world. The task of thinking cannot be left for the «professionals», as Arendt calls academic philosophers, but is a capability of everyone.

Conclusions

For Arendt thus, language binds thinking and action, the *Vita Activa* and the *Vita Contemplativa*, without collapsing them into each other. The way we use language influences our ways of thinking and apprehending the world. However, critical thinking, which for Arendt is always already discoursive and semantically tied to the world, is needed to realize our customs and habits. In Arendt's nominalistic conception of language, there is no isomorphism between thoughts and words and thus there is neither an absolute nor a final truth that can be achieved through intuitive thinking. Particular philosophical and political issues require a context-dependent analysis.

Political action requires a theoretical framework to support the political life. However, this cannot be a theory in the sense of a supratemporal or necessary set of laws or force of history. Instead, the contingent and fragile human habitat must be supported by international agreements and constitutions that secure the rights and freedom of diverse individuals and thus affirms the plurality of humanity (Taminiaux, 2002: 175–177).

The link between thinking, language and judgment is a significant political issue even in contemporary international politics, especially during the so called post cold war "new world order". George Lakoff, Shari Stone-Mediatore and Camillo C. Bica among others have paid attention to the power of patriotic language-use in war propaganda, the justification of military interference as a tool for foreign policy and the use of war as an extension of diplomacy (Shari-Mediatore, 2006; Bica, 2006). Ken McDonald, director of the UK's Public Prosecution and head of the Crown Prosecution Service has warned about the consequences of calling the fighting of international terrorism as «war on terrorism» (Bannerman, 2007: 12). This type of language-use misleadingly represents civil cities as war zones and criminals as soldiers. Moreover, our use of concepts influences not only the formation of moral judgments, but real political decision making and legislation regarding for example immigration policies. The responsibility to reflect and act on issues like these is still as important as it was in Arendt's days.

«At these moments, thinking ceases to be a marginal affair in political matters. When evrybody is swept away unthinkingly by what everyone else does and believes in, those who think are drawn out of hiding because their refusal to join is conspicuous and becomes a kind of action» (Arendt, 2003a, 188)

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[1] In *Eichmann in Jerusalem* Arendt addresses also the question of how it was possible that the resistance to the *final solution* was so minimal (Arendt, 1963/1998: 117–120, 169).

[2] Arendt's former student, Elizabeth Kamar Minnich recalls that Hans Jonas actually stopped talking to Arendt after the publication of the book (Minnich, 2002: 123) For a detailed account of the reception of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, see Cohen, 2001.

[3] It is ironic that in his lectures from 1951–1952, published as *Wass Heisst Denken?* (*What is Called Thinking*) Arendt's former teacher, Martin Heidegger had claimed that «Most thought-provoking [in our times] is that we are still not thinking» (Heidegger, 1954/1968: 4).

[4] In the interview with Günter Gaus from 1964, Arendt considers herself a political theorist rather than a philosopher. For her the importance is to understand difficult problems, not necessary to solve them (Arendt, 1994: 1–3). Richard J. Bernstein finds traces of Arendt's own thought in the passage of *Men in Dark Times* (p. 205–206), where she refers to Walter Benjamin's thinking as a form of pearl diving. (Bernstein, 2002: 279.) Elizabeth Young-Bruehl recalls that Arendt called her method «conceptual analysis» and «linguistic analysis» (Young-Bruehl, 1982/2004: 318).

[5] I thank Krista Johansson for this remark.

[6] In contemporary philosophy of mind and neurology, Antonio Damasio has used a similar research method. In addition to empirical research, Damasio has examined the texts of Descartes and Spinoza in order to understand how and why the classical mind-body division arose (see for example Damasio, 2003).

[7] Arendt, like Heidegger and the later Wittgenstein, holds that the meanings of words are formed in practices of languages. Arendt often uses as her example the word «house» and shows how the word designates various, particular houses which are all characterized by someone living and dwelling in them (Arendt, 2003a: 172–173).

MELANCHOLY OF PROGRESS: THE IMAGE OF MODERNITY AND THE TIME-RELATED STRUCTURE OF THE MIND IN ARENDT'S LATE WORK

Marcin Moskalewicz*

Abstract

In the first of her lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy Arendt writes that for the Philosopher the concept of progress contained an inherent melancholy, for its full application would preclude the possibility of contentment. Having in mind Arendt's own, consistent critique of the notion and of the related process-like image of history we can ask the question: was not progress for Arendt a rather melancholy idea? But then – in what sense of the semantically rich term might we speak about melancholy when associating it with progress? Hence, in which way could the concept of melancholy enlighten our understanding of the idea of progress?

All this has to do with Arendt's understanding of Modernity. First, the «innerwordly alienation» that in its various forms stands at its beginning is a form of a melancholic dissociation from the world. Second, *homo faber*, a figure of Modernity par excellence: lonely and detached from his fellow human beings, seems to be marked by the melancholic boredom. And progress belongs only to production, not to action. The metaphysical fallacy of representing the realm of the human affairs in the image of making is Arendt's known and constant adversary. So is progress.

In her late work Arendt attempted to develop what we may call, using her early expression, the formal structure of existence – of the mental activities in this respect, the human condition(s) of possibility. These were interestingly bound to different dimensions of time, not without its complications, especially in regard to willing and the future. Would constant projecting of one's self onto the future necessarily entail the irremediable sense of loss of the present, and therefore – depression? Would it be a lack in the self containing the whole of the present self? And was not the present time, or the gap in-between the dimension of time of the superior importance for Hannah Arendt? In which way therefore was she to deal with the melancholy of the will, the faculty she undoubtedly praised? These are the problems I would like to address in my paper.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, progress, Modernity, structure of mind, melancholy.

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I

In her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* Hannah Arendt writes that the author of the *Critique of Judgment* considered the idea of progress «melancholy»[2]. She also cites Kant's opinion on progress in *On Violence,* underscoring its «melancholy side effects»[3]. It was, according to Kant, that in progress every present condition of man «remains ever an evil, in comparison to the better condition into which he stands ready to proceed» and that it therefore «do not permit contentment to prevail».[4] To be sure, the notion of melancholy appears neither in *The End of All Things* nor in *The Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent* – the two Kantian essays Arendt refers to.[5] But her intention of its usage is quite clear, for a feeling of sadness without a cause has been common to many symptoms of the black bile disease that have been stressed during the centuries since its first recognition by Hippocrates. Others were fear, despondency, idleness and inertia with the concomitant disinterest in the outer world, i. e. all the states of the mind that the psychiatric term «depression» – basically synonymous with melancholy – refers to.[6] The fact that sadness was to be without a cause meant no more than this cause was hardly identifiable and incommensurable with the effects that had a character of moods, i.e. not particular feelings but rather ways of seeing the world in general. Though the symptoms of the melancholic mental disturbance remained surprisingly similar along the centuries its causes varied significantly. They differed from humoral and neurological to astrological and demonic. Could it be that the belief in progress might be counted among them?

We know that Arendt uses melancholy as an adjective, therefore as something reflecting the subjective state of mind that can be essentially introspected and not a noun – melancholia – associated rather with somatically conditioned disease, a state of the body.[7] Was then a feeling of melancholy a proper experience related to what she understood by progress? But then why and precisely in what sense? These questions lead to a more general problem of the human temporal constitution that Arendt addressed frequently, but nowhere with such a depth as in her *The Life of the Mind*. In that book and elsewhere the trouble with man's relation towards his future was an important issue. What was Arendt's attitude towards the future in general and what would that mean – future? What was her hierarchy between the different dimensions of time, if there was any? These are the questions I will try to answer in the following.

II

Man is essentially a temporal creature, conditioned primarily by the finite time span marked by his appearance and disappearance from the world. This finitude determines his time experience and forms the basis for authentic temporality – the experienced, relative time different from the quasi-objective «time of the world»[8]. (The continuous time sequence of everyday life, the succession of the nows as in the classical definition, is dependent for Arendt on the primordial time of the thinking ego: the

continuity is not a property of time itself, but can be experienced because «we *continue* what we started yesterday and hope to finish tomorrow»[9]. In contrast to the primordial time the continuous time is spatially conditioned.) Life is a «boundary affair»[10] writes Hannah Arendt and that «man's finitude ... constitutes the infrastructure ... of all mental activities»[11] is her fundamental contention. The primordial time – coeval with the existence of man – is given only in thinking that gathers the past and future together into the lasting present, while judging and thinking transcend the finitude of life towards the unreachable past and future. Because of that there is a hierarchical order between activities, though the primacy of thinking does not directly affect the processes of judgment and willing[12]. Thinking is an underlying faculty because it prepares the particulars for the other faculties by first de-sensing them, and second by transforming the internal images into the «thought-things» or «thought-trains». This is enabled by imagination, and thanks to it thinking annihilates both temporal and spatial distances. Things equally absent from the senses, no-longer and not-yet, remembrance and anticipation, meet in the activity of thinking.

All three dimension of time are therefore present at the same time in man, who transforms the empty time of sheer change – circular or linear – into the qualitative time of thinking experience. Past and future are experienced here as equally strong antagonistic forces, which – thanks to the spatial metaphor – can be represented as what is behind and in front of. Without man there would have been an everlasting change without the distinction of past and future.[13]

The space occupied by the thinking ego is – according to Arendt – «nowhere», i. e. the thinking ego is radically un-spatial. But temporarily it is located in the «in-betweenness» of past and future, referred to metaphorically as a «battleground» or a «gap». This gap is an extended now – the *nunc stans* – the moment of rupture in time. What is crucial is that past and future both appear here «as such», emptied of their concrete content.[14] To be sure, this extended now is quite the opposite of eternity. We are here in the heart of time and there is no escape from this «fighting presence» to the out-of-time. However, the time remains here also in the Kantian sense, as a form of the inner sense that determines the relation of representations. That means, time remains as a sequence in the mind ordering the representations of the de-sensed objects into thought-things rendering thinking discursive. This time is not a sequential time of everyday experience, for the original experience is de-spatialized. As Arendt says, the «juxtaposition» of experience is here substituted by the «succession of soundless words»[15]. These thought-things always have a definite origin in the gap – are rooted in the present and therefore inherently historical – but they point to the infinity. It is through them that the unending quest for meaning takes place.

Willing, as it has been mentioned, is together with judgment in a way secondary to thinking.[16] Both – though mental operations – never fully leave the world of appearances. In her discussion of the willing faculty Arendt proceeds both phenomenologically, following Bergson's instruction

to take the internal experiences seriously, and historically, analyzing the willing faculty in terms of its history. Willing is our mental organ for the future and it deals with the invisible, not-yet existing objects in the form of projects. Arendt's position is closest to those of Augustine and Duns Scotus, the only two western philosophers who in her opinion took the willing faculty seriously. The crucial points are: first, that willing always consists of the two parts, of *velle* and *nolle* that are involved in every willing act and ultimately form the command and obedience. Second, that as far as the process of willing lasts, the will is free, that it is its own contingent cause.[17] Arendt claims that it is «precisely the will that lurks behind our quest for causes»[18]. Third, that the internal struggle of the will can be only solved by cessation of willing and commencement of acting. And fourth, and most important, that free will is the spring of action.

The point of Arendt's argument on willing is to provide the basis for the notion of action as an absolute beginning, precisely as an absolute beginning in causality, though not in time. That such a beginning must exist is a condition of the appearance of novelty in the world and of freedom. Arendt's main effort is concerned with the preservation of the foregoing characteristics of the will against the prejudices of the philosophers traditionally more concerned with being and necessity than with freedom. Her purpose is to maintain the concept of the future as open and undetermined and to get rid of all the conceptions that imagine it in the guise of the Aristotelian potentiality – actuality, and so as a consequence of the past. In accordance with this, she is concerned with willing that is creative and *negates* the past, and not with the *affirmative* willing, which wants what happens anyway as in Epictetus, or decides not to will at all as in Heidegger's paradoxical will-not-to-will.[19]

Nevertheless, the tension between necessity and freedom remains untouched, for it is inscribed in the human mind in the form of the opposition between thinking and willing. This opposition, or the «clash» as she says, is reflected in the human experience by a certain «moods», with which the mind affects the soul.[20] In regards to the thinking activity these moods are nostalgia and remembrance constituting together the feeling of «serenity» and «quietness». In the willing faculty these are hope and fear, the two modes of expectation causing its «tenseness» and «disquiet».[21]

The last point we should underline is that the projects of the will are hardly ever realized in the form in which they were intended.[22] Although willing as creation is possible, this creation cannot assume the form of the *homo faber*-like fabrication and Arendt is consistently critical of the Marxist and existentialist notions of the self-made man. Action after all takes place only «in concert», and who we disclose in action is never visible to ourselves. If we add to this the discontinuity between action and its consequences, we can see why the projects of willing cannot be achieved and why the will cannot foresee the future.

To sum up: there would be three kinds of future. The first one is the empty future of thinking absorbed in the gap, the one that «comes towards us»; the second type is the future of willing consisting of its projects; and the third one is the future that is unpredictable and happens to

us unexpectedly.[23] Only the last one can be called an «authentic» future. It comes towards us like the future of thinking, but this time being not empty but filled with the content of concrete happenings. How do these different temporalities relate to the concept of progress? Can progress be real within the human finite temporality?

III

For Hannah Arendt progress belongs to the experience of *homo faber*, who stands in her work as a figure of Modernity. Within his categories of the world-view – instrumentality, utility and productivity – progress is quite a natural state of affairs. It concerns the relations between the different stages of the process of production – each of which is superior to the preceding one – while *homo faber* himself remains the master of the whole process being superior to the most supreme of his products. These different stages of production ultimately vanish into the end product that is definite and predictable. As far as time is concerned we can therefore speak of durability and permanence as the temporal characteristic of *homo faber*.[24] This attribute concerns his end products that add to the artifice of the world providing its durability and objectivity. This progress is limited to the transformation of the materiality of the world and cannot concern the realm of the human affairs – it would not work in the sphere of action.[25] But it perfectly works in the domain of modern science that understands the truth as something being made, where the accumulation of knowledge is as real as the improvement of its technological applicability.

The problem begins when instrumentalization inherent in *homo faber's* experience becomes unlimited and transforms the utilitarian chain of production into a mere process. When the utilitarian chain of production becomes endless we cannot any longer speak about durability, for now everything is degraded into the means towards an always transient and elusive end. The distinction between operation and product is lost and the notion of progress becomes infinite.[26]

In the context of the development of the modern science Arendt explains this phenomenon as a shift from «what and why» to «how». Modern ideals of cognition are *homo faber* ideals – the truth is accessible thanks to his instruments and verifiable in the experiment, which is a production itself. With the shift that takes place first in the natural and then in the historical sciences[27], the objects of science – nature and history – cease to be considered the lasting entities and become mere processes instead. This emphasis of the process-character of the object «transcends the mentality of man as tool-maker and fabricator, for whom, on the contrary, the production process was a mere means to an end»[28].

In the realm of the human sciences this shift towards process happens somewhat later. Still in Hegel and Marx the process of history has a beginning and an end, it is marked by a progress that culminates with fulfillment. The introduction of the never-ending progress has the most disastrous consequences in the historical realm. Embedded in the concept of organic development – «the only conceptual guarantee»[29] for the notion

of endless progress and linear time – is the conviction that every present contains in itself the seeds of the future. This is for Arendt a «turning point»[30] in the construction of the self-image of Modernity. What is lost is the classical causality principle that operates and is derived from the process of fabrication in which the cause (the author) is more perfect than its effects. Within this self-image and contrary to everyday experience nothing unexpected can happen and no authentic future is left.

The endless progress proper is for Arendt a bourgeois notion: it can be traced back to the idea of never-ending accumulation of capital and property and the related and indispensable for its secure never-ending accumulation of power characteristic of western imperialism.[31] Her critique of liberalism, the bourgeois philosophy par excellence, is in fact based on its perversion of the classical, XVIII-century notion of progress as a purposeful mean of emancipation. Liberalism as Arendt understands it overlooks the fact of human finitude and assumes for the private interests the infinite length of the time continuum annihilating true politics and true temporality. As she writes: «Death is the real reason why property and acquisition can never become a true political principle»[32].

This trend is continued in totalitarianism, the propaganda of which disseminates the sense of fatality making the perfect use and marking the culminating stage of the modern idolization of science[33]. Through the pseudo-scientificality of the totalitarian prophecies (and to the satisfaction of the masses that are longing for predictability and «refuse to recognize … the fortuitousness that pervades reality»[34]) the future emerges as already determined.

It looks in the end as though the *homo faber's* ideals have been reduced to those of *animal laborans*, for not only the durability of the artifice is lost, but also the notion of beginning and end. To be sure, this is not circular temporality over which it has certain advantages, the main being that secures the linear concept of time. But because it is all-encompassing the unlimited progress denies not only the authentic future – the unexpected – but also the future that can be planned according to the purposes of the actors.

To conclude: in *homo faber's* distorted experience that comes close to that of *animal laborans* the infinite temporality in the form of the infinite progress takes precedence over the human finitude. Connection of this infinite progress (qualitatively different from the limited progress of production) with melancholy becomes clear once we think about another concept that can be associated both with the state of melancholy and with the experience of *homo faber*, namely, the loss.

IV

In this respect, the Freudian account of melancholy may be useful. Remembering Arendt's own aversion to psychoanalysis deemed by her a «pseudo-science» it is hardly possible – even if she knew Freud's conception – to have it in mind while writing about Kant's attitude towards progress in her catchy phrase. But that account has a certain advantages over

the others, mainly because Freud analyzes melancholy in terms of loss and provides a prospect for associating it with experiences other than death. In his instructive essay on the subject he examines melancholy in terms of its correlation with mourning, as its pathological transformation. Crucial for the present discussion is that mourning is for Freud a reaction not only to a loss of a loved person, but also «to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as fatherland, liberty, and ideal, and so on»[35]. Moreover, he states that «the occasions giving rise to melancholia for the most part extend beyond the clear case of a loss by death»[36]. And his explanation runs roughly as follows.

First, the symptoms of mourning and melancholia are quite similar, i. e. inhibition of activity, grief and dejection. But in melancholia in addition to mourning we have the lowering of self-esteem of the sufferer. This component of self-accusation is central to Freud's and all post-Freudian accounts of melancholy.[37] Moreover, we do not clearly see what has been lost (the age-old theme of sadness without a cause reappears again, yet now the unknown cause has been delegated into the unconscious). Freud's explanation for this phenomenon is that the lost object, the other person or some abstraction, have been incorporated – «introjected» as he says – into the self, and therefore the patient experiences the loss as the lack in the self. In consequence the work of mourning cannot be completed[38] and we have instead to do with the impoverishment of the sufferer's ego experienced by himself, or to put it differently with the loss of that part of the self, which has been identified with the now introjected object (in Freud's technical language this is the withdrawal of the libido from the object into the subject). The precondition for this process is the ambivalence of the attitude towards the lost object.[39]

Now, to go back to Hannah Arendt, the theme of loss is one of the central and ever-recurring concepts in her writings, associated most of all with the break in tradition that separates the Modern Age from the contemporary world. But as far as *homo faber* is concerned it is the Modern Age that begins with alienation, which is itself a kind of loss, a withdrawal and separation from the world. It is first, the spatial alienation of man from his immediate surroundings resulting in the discovery of the globe, and second, the world-alienation analyzed by Weber and resulting in the new capitalist mentality. This second alienation is not yet a self-alienation as Arendt underlines, but quite on the contrary is based on the care for the self.

The most important however, and directly connected with *homo faber* is the alienation that takes place in science and in philosophy simultaneously. While the discovery of the Archimedean standpoint enables the alienation from the earth in natural sciences, in philosophy it manifests itself in its increasing subjectivisation that starts with the Cartesian doubt. The outcome in the sciences is the distrust towards the world as given to the senses and a quest for the reality of being underlying the appearances (symbolized by the telescope) while in philosophy it is the quest for certainty in introspection with the effect of *reductio scientiae ad mathematicam*, the pattern of the human mind.

Altogether, it is the loss of the sensual world.

The loss of the self is to a certain extent simultaneous with these processes (as Arendt emphasizes, the *res cogitans* cannot survive the loss of the *res extensa*), but the entire implications of some of the modern ideals become fully realized only in totalitarian domination. Arendt's analysis of the totalitarian ideology from *Ideology and Terror* may shed some light on this theme of loss.

In her account ideology is an instrument of explanation of history – not only past, but all becoming – that proceeds by applying the deductive logic to the inspiring, single idea that serves as its premise. History is here understood as a movement, the law of which – the direction and character of change – is provided by this idea. Analogy with her later fully developed concept of *homo faber* is evident. However, what distinguishes the totalitarian ideologies from their XIX century predecessors is the lack of the guiding idea abandoned in favour of the sheer logicality: together with the loss of direction they become the «permanent movement to nowhere». And to come to the theme of loss: the basic experience of *homo faber* – as Arendt repeatedly stresses – and the necessary condition of fabrication is «isolation» of the maker from his fellow human beings, with whom he is unable to enter into the meaningful relationship except as on the market.[40] This isolation is a precondition of political tyrannies and though man in a tyranny is politically isolated he still remains in contact with the artificial world of his products.[41] However, with the totalitarian reduction to *animal laborans* man is no longer «isolated» – he becomes «lonely». He losses not only the political realm – the inter-subjectively constructed reality – but also his own self. In Arendt's words: «Self and world, capacity for thought and experience are lost at the same time»[42]. Together with the artificial world and the relationship with others man losses also himself. What remains is bare life without the past and the future, reflecting the circular temporality of nature.

To sum up the forgoing: the melancholy of (infinite) progress happens when the *homo faber's* categories become perverted towards those of *animal laborans*, i. e. when in the experience of progress its end products become unattainable. This process in marked by the concomitant loss of the world and of the self. What underlies this twofold loss is the more fundamental loss of the original, qualitative time of thinking, first in favour of the fictional, infinite linear time, and eventually – as it happened with the modern masses' attitude towards history – in favor of the indifferent circular temporality of *animal laborans*. What is ultimately lost together with the authentic present is the authentic future, for now the future is understood as already embedded in the present. Together with the authentic, unpredictable experience of that future man looses also himself. How to overcome the melancholy of progress?

V

At first sight, it seems as if will understood as its own contingent cause and as a creation and not affirmation would be a sufficient remedy.

Arendt can agree neither with the Nietzschean repudiation of the will and causality in favour of the eternal recurrence of everything for that would mean recourse to the circular temporality of *animal laborans* and would resemble Epictetus' solution. Nor can she accept Heidegger's *Kehre* that she interprets as a renunciation of the willing faculty, which would result in the idle state of serenity. But she agrees with both of them as far as their arguments on the inherent destructiveness of willing are concerned. It is true that will wants to overcome everything, and that it understands the future not as something that approaches us from the front, but as what is determined by out projects. After all, the infinite progress, in her words a «permanent annihilation»[43], is in perfect accordance with the experience of the willing ego that transcends the limited life span of the human life. The main problem with willing is however that by devouring every present in favour of the future *ad infinitum* it implies the loss of what has not yet happened. As Arendt writes while commenting Nietzsche's attitude towards the will: «expectation, the mood with which the will affects the soul, contains within itself the melancholy of an and-this-too-*will-have-been*, the foreseeing of the future's past, which reasserts the Past as the dominant tense of Time»[44].

The connection between the melancholy of progress and the melancholy of willing lies precisely in this anticipation of the future's past. In both there is a longing for the future involved, which can never be satisfied, for every future is already lost in advance. As Kristeva maintains, melancholy is characterized by the distorted sense of the time in which there is no horizon and no perspective towards something because everything is gone. For the melancholic person the past is the dominant tense of time and «an overinflated, hyperbolic past fills all the dimensions of psychic continuity»[45]. The difference with the Arendtian melancholy would be that here the lost object of the melancholiac is the future, which is becoming the past before it has happened.[46] In order to solve the destructive predicaments of willing and unsatisfied with the solutions provided by the philosophers Arendt returns at the end of her book on willing to the men of action for help. But as far as she does not find what she expected, namely the notion of action as an absolute and not a relative beginning, she ends up with Augustine, along with Duns Scouts and Kant her most important author on the subject. It is his notion of *initium* that seems to be the only guarantee for the possibility of an absolute beginning. And it all looks like she is willing to abandon the absolute freedom of the will in favour of the limited political freedom. So in the end it seems that only action – the necessary precondition of which is the will – but not the will itself, is able to solve the predicaments of melancholy temporality.

If we look upon the temporal traits of both the *vita activa* and the cognitive capacities of the mind a curious parallel between them emerges.[47] It is as if they corresponded to each other on the three levels and were moreover hierarchically arranged. At the bottom level there is, on the one hand, the activity of labor, and on the other, the abilities of logical reasoning. Both belong to what is given to man by the mere fact of being alive and are marked by a circular temporality with neither beginning nor

end. On the middle level there lies the relationship between fabrication and intellect, based on the fact that both rely on the categories of means and ends, and both are concerned with production of tangible results. The notion of time underlying them would be the linear, sequential time that is the continuous time of everyday experience.

The most important and occupying the highest position would be the correspondence between thinking and acting.[48] It is true that Hannah Arendt was frequently warning against their equation. But it is also true that their close relationship is undeniable. First of all, they both proceed through logos – the coherent speech – towards disclosure of meaning: «Thinking beings have an urge to speak, speaking beings have an urge to think»[49]. Then, both are the ends-in-themselves and leave not durable outcomes behind – the «frailty» of action is here mirroring the frailty of thoughts. Next, both have a definite beginning but no identifiable end, for they are pointing into the infinite. And finally, when if comes to temporality, it is the authentic, primordial time of the in-betweenness of past and future that underlies them. Both thinking and acting take place in this gap in time, even though in the case of acting this gap is in addition constituted spatially by the in-betweenness of the public realm, which the thinking lacks. And the conclusion is that only action, which reflects the original temporal experience of the human being and opens up the horizon of possibilities for the authentic future can overcome the melancholy of progress.

VI

This solution would be reasonable as far as the connection of melancholy with the distorted temporality is concerned, if it had not been contradicted by some other Arendt's statements. In fact, her paradoxical usage of the term points to one of the crucial tensions of her philosophy. By citing Kant this time as well, she uses the term «melancholy» in a different context in order to designate the inherent haphazardness of the historical process, founded both on the haphazardness and particularity of willing and the omnipresence of the unintended consequences of action.[50] Again, the term «melancholy» does not occur in Kant, but is – at this time – Arendt's translation of the German «trostlos»[51] (in this context she also speaks about «annoying contingency»[52]). This melancholy signifies the loss of the whole that could provide the meaning to the particular. Kant's solution to this «deep-rooted melancholy disposition»[53] is an escape into the whole constituted by the idea of the progress of mankind understood as a part of nature and subject to its ruse. It is only thanks to this assumption of progress that History can make sense for him.

According to Arendt the irreconcilability of the idea of Man's intrinsic dignity with the notion of progress as the law of the human species, i.e. between the perspectives of actor and spectator, is the basic contradiction of Kant's philosophy.[54] But a similar tension is present in her philosophy of history. While claiming that «it is against human dignity to believe in progress»[55], she recognizes at the same time the urgency of the «redemp-

tion from melancholy haphazardness»[56]. The difference is of course that with the assumption of progress the meaning can be disclosed at the beginning – as if future, the one that is coming towards us, has not existed. All future appears here as determined, and as in *homo faber's* product its beginning contains the seeds of the end – except that for Kant this progress in perpetual and infinite. For Arendt on the other hand the escape into the whole is also an indispensable task but it can only assume the form of the backward glance. It is as if the «innermost meaning» of action itself was not enough and had to be complemented by the spectator's historical meaning. But in the need to redeem the past from its contingency there is an ever-present danger that by introducing «the authors» of the process in the form of causes different from particular volitions, the story told will assume an oppressive role, denying the dignity of man and the authentic future. This tension is never ultimately resolved by Hannah Arendt, and its irresolvability looks like another predicament of the dry and cold disease.

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1 This paper was made possible thanks to the support of the Marie Curie program «European Doctorate in the Social History of Europe».

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3 Arendt, H. On Violence. In: Arendt H. *Crises of the Republic*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972. P. 128.

4 Kant, I. *The End of All Things*; cited after Arendt, LKPP, p. 9.

5 Though Kant had his own notion of melancholy, which he understood – in accord with the spirit of his time – as a mental disorder, «the illness of the soul with regard to the cognitive faculty» (Kant, I. On the Cognitive Faculties. In: *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. V.L. Dowdell, in: J. Radden (ed.) *The Nature of Melancholy.* New York: Oxford UP, 2000, p. 199). In the clinical discourse since Kraepelin it is common to distinguish between the disorders of affection and of cognition with melancholy belonging to the former. See: Radden, J. *From Melancholic States to Clinical Depression*. In: J. Radden (ed.), op. cit., p. 3–51.

6 Jackson, S.W. *Melancholia and Depression, From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times*. New Heaven, London: Yale UP, 1986, p. 14–25; Radden, op. cit., p. 22–24.

7 A semantic distinction mirroring the difference between the phenomenological and the behavioral attitudes towards depression, as either internally or externally diagnosed; see: Radden, op. cit., p. 29–36.

8 Arendt, H. *The Life of The Mind. Vol. I. Thinking.* San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace&Co, 1978, p. 20–21 (cited thereafter as LOM I). I refrain here from commenting on Arendt's indebtedness to Heidegger's analysis of the temporal structure of *dasein*. That her point of departure is existential phenomenology is quite evident, all the differences with Heidegger notwithstanding.

9 LOM I, p. 205.

10 LOM I, p. 192.

11 LOM I, p. 201.

12 LOM I, p. 76–77, 213.

13 On time experience of the thinking ego see especially: LOM I, p. 197–213.

14 LOM I, p. 206.

15 LOM I, p. 202.

16 I exclude the faculty of judgment from the present discussion for it is not substantially related to the overall argument of this essay.

17 Consequences of Arendt's position may be best illustrated by Duns Scotus' theory of partial causes, where the infinite number of causes coincide engendering the contingent human historical reality. As she eagerly repeats after Scotus contingency is the price to be paid for freedom; see: LOM II, p. 137–139.

18 LOM II, p. 89.

19 Such a will becomes omnipotent, for it ceases to project the novelty, being contented instead with the affirmation of existence and events as they happen. It is therefore not helpless upon the unattainability of its own projects.

20 LOM II, p. 34–38.

21 Although the experience of willing is more real in a sense that we can simply prove freedom by refraining from doing something, whereas in the case of thinking we can neither prove nor disprove the necessary character of the present moment; see: LOM II, p. 139–140.

22 This problem is informatively analyzed by: Honig, B. *Arendt, Identity and Difference // Political Theory.* 1988. Vol. 16(1), p. 77–98.

23 That is the future of proper action as analyzed by Arendt in *The Human Condition*.

24 Ricoeur, P. Action, Story and History: On Re-reading The Human Condition, *Salmagundi*. 1983. Vol. 60, p. 60–72.

25 «To act in the form of making, to reason in the form of 'reckoning with consequences', means to leave out the unexpected, the event itself, since it would be unreasonable or irrational to expect that is no more than the 'infinite improbability'»; see: Arendt, H. *The Human Condition.* Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 300 (cited thereafter as HC).

26 As far as the process and not the product is concerned we have here instead of time as durability the time as passing.

27 HC, p. 296–297.

28 HC, p. 297.

29 Arendt, *On Violence*, p. 128.

30 HC, p. 312.

31 Arendt, H. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt, Inc., 1968, p. 139–147 (cited thereafter as OT).

32 OT, p. 145.

33 OT, p. 346.

34 OT, p. 351–352.

35 Freud, S. *Mourning and Melancholy*; trans. J. Strachey. In: J. Radden (ed.), op. cit., p. 283.

36 Ibid, p. 289. Melancholy belongs to actual neuroses, which have a psychogenic origin – they stem from actual life experiences and events and are not an outcome of some somatogenic processes; see: Jackson, op. cit., p. 219–227.

37 Radden, op. cit., p. 44–47.

38 In mourning the task is accomplished when the ego reconciles with the loss and invests its libido elsewhere.

39 In *Mourning and Melancholia* Freud does not settle whether the narcissism is constitutional, i.e. forms the basis of the original choice of the object of love, or is it the outcome of the regression of libido into the ego after the loss. The ambivalence struggle happens in the subconsciousness and when it becomes conscious the ego becomes divided into two and criticizes itself.

40 One can therefore consider *homo faber* already a melancholic figure as far as the loss of the world is concerned, even if his experience of progress is limited and essentially positive. Interestingly, melancholy has been traditionally associated with the notion of creative genius as a side effect of intellectual or artistic

creativity and brilliance, a theme starting with pseudo-Aristotle's *Problems*, continued throughout Modernity and not wholly abandoned even by Freud (Radden, op. cit., p. 12–17). And genius is for Arendt an ideal of the Modern Age, a bit more, but still a *homo faber*. The work of genius – she claims – is in this sense distinct from production that the product surpasses here the author. This lack of the superiority of the creator is for Arendt a «predicament» of genius (HC, p. 210–211).

41 OT, p. 474–475.

42 OT, p. 477.

43 LOM II, p. 50.

44 LOM II, p. 171. The idea of the melancholy character of the will goes against the traditional association of depression with the lack of voluntary control.

45 Kristeva, J. *Black Sun, Depression and Melancholia*; trans. L.S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1989, p. 60.

46 Although for Arendt melancholy would also have a classical sense. She writes that the moods of the activity of thinking – to the extent that it is connected with remembrance – «incline to melancholy» (LOM II, p. 36). She also speaks about the idea of the golden age as a «melancholy thought» (LOM II, p. 215).

47 On the distinction between cognitive capacities see: e. g. HC, p. 170–171. On the temporal traits of the *vita activa* see: Ricoeur, op. cit., and of the life of the mind see: Taminiaux, J. *Time and the inner conflicts of the mind*. In: J.J. Hermsen, D.R. Villa (eds.) *The Judge and The Spectator, Hannah Arendt's Political Philosophy*. Leuven: Peeters, 1999, p. 43–58.

48 See: Jonas, H. *Acting, Knowing, Thinking: Gleanings from Hannah Arendt's Philosophical Work // Social Research*. 1977. Vol. 44(1), p. 25–43.

49 LOM I, p. 99.

50 The phrase «melancholy haphazardness» appears several times, see: Arendt, H. *Between Past and Future*. New York: Viking Press, 1968, p. 82, 85, 242 (thereafter as BPF); LKPP, p. 24.

51 The German *trostlos* means *grim* or *dreary*, to be sure a mood that can be associated with melancholia.

52 BPF, p. 242.

53 LKPP, p. 25.

54 LKPP, p. 51–58.

55 LKPP, p. 77.

56 BPF, p. 85.

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